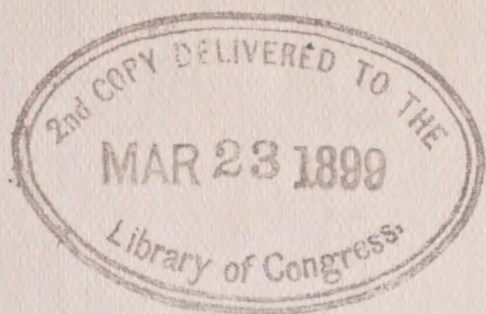


HELENA



BY H. S. IRWIN



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

Chap. P 23 Copyright No.

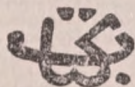
Shelf I 73 H

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

HELENA

BY
H. S. IRWIN

"'Tis strange, but true; for truth is always strange,
Stranger than fiction. If it could be told,
How much would novels gain by the exchange!
How differently the world would men behold!"
—BYRON.



NEW YORK:

COPYRIGHT, 1899, BY

G. W. Dillingham Co., Publishers,

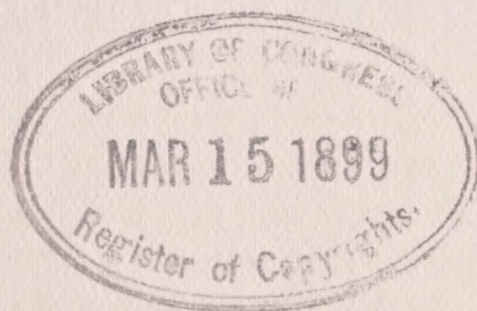
MDCCCXCIX.

[*All rights reserved.*]

PZ3
.I73H

27348

TWO COPIES RECEIVED.



11134
Feb. 7. 99.

AUTHOR'S NOTE.

WHILE this work is a novel pure and simple, many of its incidents are taken from real life.

The history of Mrs. Helena Brannan is that of one with whom I had a long personal acquaintance and with a single exception is related with strict fidelity to truth. The one exception is that the real woman had no daughter by a first marriage. That fiction is resorted to in order to enable me to weave another life drama into her true story.

The "Old Maid's Club" and "Raging Tads Society" for the ends and purposes described, had actual existence. The fortune-teller's story, so far as the medical examination in the army is concerned, is literally true. The double life of Captain Brannan is a matter of history, easy of authentication in nearly every detail. The double life of Herman Clark is introduced to illustrate and teach a lesson drawn from the character of one who is thoroughly orthodox in religious professions, who always praises honor and virtue and strongly condemns all sin as sin, and yet habitually and unhesitatingly indulges in sin. I have purposely avoided word-painting in descriptions of persons and places and all moralizing, leaving the actions and words of the characters as recorded to teach the lesson intended to be conveyed.

H. S. IRWIN.

LOUISVILLE, KY.

Jan. 10, 1899.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. The New Arrival	9
II. The Timid Lover	16
III. The Entertainment	25
IV. A Moonlight Ride	35
V. The Cabin on the Cliff	44
VI. An Unexpected Result	58
VII. Mother and Daughter	65
VIII. Deux Cartes De Visite	74
IX. The Fortune-teller's Story	82
X. The Missing Wife Found	95
XI. The Old Maids' Club	112
XII. The Dromio Lovers	124
XIII. A Villainous Plot	138
XIV. Baseness of a Rival	143
XV. Arrest for Forgery	153
XVI. A Friend and an Enemy at Work	158
XVII. The Enemy Still at Work	165
XVIII. The Search Resumed	171
XIX. Mental Telegraphy	178
XX. The Hard Heart Softened	185

CHAPTER	PAGE
XXI. Trial of St. Clair . . .	190
XXII. The Raging Tads . . .	198
XXIII. Tragic Scene in Court . . .	205
XXIV. The Avenger's Fate . . .	212
XXV. The Unexpected Message . . .	221
XXVI. Confession of Crime . . .	226
XXVII. In the Toils . . .	234
XXVIII. Unmasked . . .	244
XXIX. True and yet Untrue . . .	254
XXX. None so Fair as She . . .	260
XXXI. The Log Cabin Metamorphosed . . .	269

HELENA.

CHAPTER I.

THE NEW ARRIVALS.

“I fill this cup to one made up
Of loveliness alone,—
A woman, of her gentle sex,
The seeming paragon.
To whom the better elements
And kindly stars have given
A form so fair that, like the air,
'Tis less of earth than heaven.”

—*Pinckney.*

“HERE you are, Frank, on time, as usual,” exclaimed Harry Thorne, as his friend, Frank Burton, entered the law office of Triston & Son, in the town of Corinth. “I have just finished my day’s task, and am ready for our conference.”

“Do you feel competent to turn your great, legal mind from the ponderous subjects of jurisprudence to the light mental exercises of a committee on pro-

gram?" replied Frank, as he seated himself in a comfortable office-chair.

"Oh, yes; even great minds must have relaxation."

"Before we begin our work, I hope you can satisfy my consuming curiosity regarding the middle-aged lady and the beautiful young lady who occupied seats in the pew with Lawyer Triston's family last Sunday. You doubtless imagine that my anxiety is wholly to know about the elder of the two, but, to be as frank as my name entitles me to be, I'll confess I ask about both, only that I may learn of one."

"Be careful, my boy; don't lose your heart at first sight of an unknown young lady, even if she is marvelously attractive."

"Don't be uneasy, Harry; there is no danger. There might be, except for the fact that a certain little bright-eyed blonde I have known all my life has full possession of all the heart Frank Burton ever had, or ever will have."

"Loyally said, my dear Frank. I feel perfectly assured that the aforesaid bright-eyed blonde will never have cause to experience jealousy's dread pangs. But to your question: I am sorry that I have but little more light than yourself. I only know that the name of the elder lady is Mrs. Helena Brannan; and the young lady is her daughter by a former marriage, answering to the name of Miss Katie Gardiner. They are old friends of Mr. Triston, and have accepted an invitation to make their home with him for a time. I shall soon have more information to impart, as I am invited to spend to-morrow evening at Mr. Triston's

house. After that, I can—but here comes Mr. Triston; he can enlighten us concerning the new additions to the social circle of our little city.”

William Triston, the senior member of the law firm of Triston & Son, at this moment entered his office, and pleasantly greeted the young men, both of whom he had known from their early boyhood. He was a man of handsome personal appearance, with a kindly face and prepossessing manners. He had been living for many years in his present location in the town of Corinth. Although Corinth had not a large population, it was surrounded by a fertile and prosperous farming district, and affording a fair opportunity for an able and energetic lawyer to obtain a lucrative practice. A few years previous to the opening of our story he had taken his son Robert into partnership; and recently, Henry Thorne, a young man of excellent family and fine mental promise, had entered his office as a student and assistant in minor matters of practice.

“Mr. Triston,” said Frank, “I was just asking Harry about the new arrivals, whose first appearance with your family at church on Sunday attracted the attention always aroused by the coming of strangers into small communities such as ours. I was not influenced by idle curiosity, but by a desire to know and welcome among us those whose merits are at once fully attested by their being honored with your friendship.”

“The opportunity to speak on this subject affords me pleasure,” replied Mr. Triston. “My absence on business has prevented my doing so before to Harry,

It is my earnest desire that you and your families, as well as others of our church and community, should soon become acquainted with my visitors, and add as much as possible to their pleasure and enjoyment. Mrs. Brannan is a very dear friend, whom I have known from her childhood. About six years ago her husband, Captain Presley Brannan, mysteriously disappeared. They were living at Fremont, in this State. One day Captain Brannan told his wife that he was going to Lawrence to attend a lodge meeting, cautioning her not to be uneasy should he be late in returning. He went to Lawrence (a town only four miles distant), and was known to be at the meeting; but was never seen or heard of afterwards. There can be no doubt that in some way he lost his life, although his body could not be found. His home was pleasant. Mrs. Brannan was a noble, loving and devoted wife. He could have had no reasons for deserting her. The wife mourns him as dead, and all who know the happy surroundings of his life agree with her that in some unaccountable manner he lost his life. It is now nearly six years since his disappearance. At the end of seven years, if no trace of him is found, the law regards him as dead. He had a four-thousand dollar insurance policy on his life, and, as attorney for Mrs. Brannan, I will demand payment of same as soon as the seven years expire. In the meantime, I have prevailed upon her to make her home with me. She has had a great sorrow, and, notwithstanding the lapse of time, still feels its oppressive weight. The daughter, by a former marriage, Miss Katie Gardiner, is affected

by the bereavement only so far as it saddens her mother. As she has for several years been absent from home attending school, she scarcely knew her stepfather.

I understand that she has developed talent to a remarkable degree as an elocutionist. I predict that she will prove quite an acquisition in that line at your young people's entertainments."

"Isn't that glorious news," exclaimed Harry. "The object of our present conference is to arrange a program for a public entertainment. Do you think, Mr. Triston, that Miss Gardiner could be prevailed upon to take a part?"

"I have no authority to speak for her in this matter," replied Mr. Triston, "but I think an invitation will receive a favorable answer, as I will add any influence I may have to that end. Now, my young friends, I will take any mail awaiting me, and leave you to complete your arrangements."

Mr. Triston withdrew and the two young men set to work to draft a program. When it was outlined in rough they agreed that Frank Burton should secure the acceptances of those selected for the musical numbers, and Harry Thorne those desired for the speeches and recitations. The date of the entertainment was fixed for Friday night of the week following. Two days later Frank and Harry met to report progress. Each had been successful. All invited had consented to take part. Harry was able to report that Mr. Robert Triston, the eloquent young lawyer, and Miss Katie Gardiner, the new arrival, would each give a recitation.

Frank had secured an instrumental quartette, a soprano and a bass soloist. Full arrangements were made for advertising and securing the greatest publicity possible. Notices and invitations were to be sent to all within reach.

"As soon as the programs are printed," said Harry, "I am going to send one to my friend, Harvey St. Clair, of Memphis. He often drives over here and I should like very much to have him present."

"What nonsense, Harry," exclaimed Frank. "You know he never comes here except to get on a spree and it is ridiculous to imagine he will come to an entertainment such as we have arranged for."

"That is the very reason I wish to invite him. Who knows but some good may come of it? Harvey St. Clair has a noble, generous nature, and in many respects gives promise of a useful and, perhaps, a brilliant career. True, he is a little wild and lately has shown a weakness for the flowing bowl; yet I have hopes that one possessing so many good traits will see the folly of his present course and change before the evil habit is too firmly fixed. At least, I will do all I can to save him."

"All right, my friend," returned Frank. "Send for him by all means. I hope good may come of it; but my fear is, that if he comes at all, which I doubt, he will be in a condition not to know whether the exercises are of a temperance or a Bacchanalian character."

"If such should be the case, he will miss a rare treat, for the new arrival is going to prove a star of the first magnitude. St. Clair is, I know, passionately fond of

the high order of histrionic talent. If I am not greatly mistaken, Miss Katie Gardiner will create a profound sensation. I speak knowingly, for I heard her, the other evening when I called, recite 'Hamlet's soliloquy.' Quite a large company of visitors was present, and at Mr. Triston's request she gave several recitations. Ah, Frank, there is no doubt, as Mr. Triston told us, that she has developed talent to a remarkable degree as an elocutionist; and added to this is great personal beauty. We need have no fear of our program's failing to please. The audience will be satisfied to see and hear her alone. You saw her only at a distance in church, and was struck with her beauty; but when she throws her whole soul into the sentiments of the theme, her dark, liquid brown eyes speak volumes, and she seems the personification of grace and loveliness. I could not but think of the poet's paragon,

'To whom the better elements
And kindly stars have given
A form so fair that, like the air,
'Tis less of earth than heaven.'

I am not in love, Frank. My admiration, though real, is professional. We are in the show business, and I am delighted that we shall be the first to introduce to the public here so great an attraction. But I will say no more, you will soon have opportunity to judge for yourself."

CHAPTER II.

THE TIMID LOVER.

“How long must I conceal
What yet my heart could wish were known?
How long the truest passion feel,
And yet that passion fear to own?”
—*Cortwright.*

“Hard is the fate of him who loves,
Yet dares not tell his trembling pain.”
—*Thomson.*

IN the small town of Memphis, situated a few miles south of Corinth, in a plain room furnished as a bachelor's apartment, we introduce to the reader a young man who is to figure prominently in the pages of this narrative. He is of striking personal appearance—nearly six feet in height and finely proportioned. He wears full beard and mustache; has regular features and deep blue eyes. His face and bearing indicate honesty and sincerity; yet a certain air of indecision about him suggests that he might be influenced by surroundings to either a noble or ignoble life. If ignoble, it would be only to his own hurt and not to that of others. There are natures, warm, generous and just toward all about them; incapable of doing a wrong or injustice to a fellow-being, yet weak in the active resources for self-advancement, utterly failing in

the accomplishment of the great purposes of life, unless aided and spurred on by congenial associations. Such was the character of Harvey St. Clair.

On the table beside him is a bottle of wine, and a wine glass half full. He drowsily reclines in an easy chair, as he smokes his Turkish pipe. A knock at his door arouses him, and, as it opens, he exclaims, "My dear Jack, how glad I am to see you! I was wishing for company to keep me awake and to share my Bordeaux. Come, have a glass, and sit down for a good long talk."

"Thanks, I will take the seat, but not the wine. I never indulge," replied the visitor, as he dropped into a chair by the side of the table.

"True," responded St. Clair, "for the moment, I forgot your weakness in abstaining from the cup that cheers."

"The Lord knows I am weak enough, but my weakness in that direction is perhaps the only strength of which I am possessed. At any rate, I will avoid embracing an enemy by which I might be shorn of such power as I have," said the young man, as he wearily placed his elbow on the table and rested his head on his hand.

"Well, Jack, have your own way. I do not desire to change your views. As for myself, I have no notion of renouncing all the good things of this life. One thing certain, I can commend your fortitude in refusing a drink now, for any one so obviously sad and melancholy as you are must be strongly tempted to find surcease of sorrow in any way possible. But I

know your trouble. Ah, Jack, love is a troublesome malady. You have to come to your old friend for another confidential chat; and now, though my wine is refused, I hope my words may give you comfort. Since you confided to me the story of what you term a hopeless love, I have been making observations, and I am strongly inclined to believe that your bashfulness is the principal obstacle in your way."

"Do not mock me with such words. I know that it is impossible to win her. It is absurd for me to even dream of such a thing, and yet I cannot overcome my passion. You know well the disparity in our social stations."

"Let me analyze the disparity," answered Mr. St. Clair, with a quiet smile, and a twinkle in his bright blue eyes. "In the first place, Jack, you are not overly handsome, although very well in your way, while the object of your adoration is very beautiful. In the second place, you are about as far from being a Rothschild as it is possible to be, while she is very rich. Only two items of disparity—one in personal appearance and one in dollars and cents. I admit these little items place you at a disadvantage, but the first one she may regard as immaterial, in view of your recognized mental and moral qualities; the second your industry and ability may, in time, remove; or she may consider it overbalanced by the wealth of your love and devotion. 'Faint heart ne'er won fair lady.' Have you in any way made known to the lady the interest she has aroused in your affections?"

"No, no. The presumption would be too great. I

shall never by word or look betray the consuming passion that has taken possession of me. Her bright eyes aroused it the first time I saw her. I know she regards me only as a chance acquaintance of a few months, and if I were to disclose my feelings, she would despise me, and I should only be more miserable than I am now. No, Harvey, I shall lock the secret in my heart. I thank you for your kind words. It is some relief to unburden my misery to a sympathizing friend; but you and I alone are to know."

At this moment footsteps were heard at the door and a boy's voice called out:

"Mr. St. Clair, here is a letter for you."

Opening the door, St. Clair received from the hands of the boy a letter which had just been brought from the post office. Excusing himself to his friend, he sat down to peruse it, and while he is thus engaged the reader can make a closer observation of the melancholy lover.

John Gage was a young man about four and twenty years of age, less than a year the senior of St. Clair, with whom he had been intimate since childhood. His parents had moved to a farm near Memphis when he was six years of age. Harvey St. Clair's parents lived on the farm adjoining on the north side. This farm did not front on the Corinth turnpike, but was reached by a country road running along the north line of the Gage homestead. At the ages of six and five respectively John and Harvey were one day formally introduced by their elder brothers. From this first day of their acquaintance an attachment was formed

which had continued ever since. As they grew up they attended the same district country school, in what was known, far and wide, as McKinley's old log school house; later they became pupils in the High School of Memphis, occupying seats side by side and keeping in the same classes until completion of the full course of studies.

Mr. John Gage at the time we meet him in St. Clair's room was dressed in a plain but neat business suit. He was not handsome, but had a pleasant face, one on which sincerity was plainly stamped. He was somewhat under medium height, slender in frame, yet healthful and active in appearance and bearing. His eyes were light steel gray, hair and complexion bordering on the sandy, yet almost too light and fair to be so designated.

On quitting school both John and Harvey had sought employment in their native town. At the present time the former is a clerk, with a very meager salary, in the principal dry goods store of the town, and the latter is teller in the only bank which the place boasted. Neither of them is satisfied with his prospects, and they contemplate soon striking out in the world for a wider field. About six months previous to the time of the conversation just narrated, Miss Lena Barnard had come on a visit to her uncle, who lived on what was known as Meadow Farm, situated about midway between Memphis and Corinth. This home place of Mr. Joseph Barnard was the most elegant and valuable in the entire county. Mr. Barnard was not

only wealthy, but honored and respected for his high character as a citizen and neighbor.

On the opposite side of the turnpike from Meadow Farm, a few hundred yards to the east, was located the small farm on which John Gage's parents and sisters still lived. A friendly intercourse had always existed between the two families, notwithstanding their widely different financial standing. Miss Lena Barnard, after graduating, had accepted an urgent invitation from her uncle to take a long rest in the country. She soon became acquainted with the sisters of John Gage, one of whom was about her own age. As John spent his Sundays and, occasionally, week-day evenings at his father's home, and as the young ladies sometimes visited the store where he was employed, on shopping expeditions, he was thrown much in the society of Miss Barnard, with the result disclosed to the confidential ear of St. Clair. Lena's father, Mr. Samuel Barnard, was reputed to be far more wealthy than his brother Joseph. He was a prosperous wholesale merchant in the city of Vernon in an adjoining State, only about two hundred miles distant.

"Here is a corker, if I may use inelegant but expressive slang," exclaimed St. Clair, as he finished reading the letter. "The idea of such a message to me from Harry Thorne—ha, ha, ha; wants me to attend a temperance meeting. How absurd!"

"What does he say?" asked Gage. "Harry Thorne is not usually absurd about anything. The absurdity to you is doubtless on account of the temperance

feature mentioned. If the invitation had been to a wine supper, how different would have been your exclamation!"

"Here is the letter; read it for yourself," and St. Clair handed it to his friend, who read as follows:

"Dear Friend Harvey,—The young people of our place have formed a temperance band, and, in order to advertise the movement, a literary and musical entertainment will be given on next Friday evening in the town hall. A new arrival in Corinth, Miss Katie Gardiner, said to be a very fine elocutionist, will give a recitation; and our friend, Robert Triston, will also recite; instrumental and vocal music by our best talent will be interspersed. You may think it strange that I invite you to come so far to an entertainment of this character, but you sometimes come for a frolic; now, come this time to please me. With your wine-bibbing ideas you may think that we teetotalers cannot have an enjoyable evening; but we can. You owe me a visit, and I will look for you. Sincerely your friend,
"HARRY THORNE."

"Nothing ridiculous about that letter," said Gage, as he laid it on the table.

"Will you go with me, if I conclude to make a martyr of myself to please Harry?"

"Let me see. No; I cannot go on next Friday night. My sister and Miss Barnard have laid claim on me as escort to a spelling bee at McKinley's old log schoolhouse. But I think you ought to go."

"Well, I will think about it. Perhaps if I provide a good supply of the ardent to cheer me on the way back, I might be able to stand it. By the way, Jack, have you heard of a strange character, calling himself the Almanac Fortune-teller, who has recently located in the old cabin on the high cliff, just this side of Corinth?"

"Yes; sister Lizzie and Miss Barnard were speaking of him yesterday. Like all girls, they would like the fun of having their fortunes told; but as it is such a secluded and desolate place, and he may be a madman, I did not encourage their making the trip."

"I suggest that we go alone first, and if it promises well we can then arrange to take the ladies."

"Very well; I will go with you some evening soon. Now, I must be off. Throw that bottle away, Harvey. I don't want my best friend to go to the dogs. Although you won't believe it, the habit is getting too strong a hold on you, my dear fellow. Good-bye."

"Good-bye, Jack. Do not be uneasy. I can drink or let it alone, as I choose."

Mr. Gage shook his head and passed out of the room.

St. Clair poured out a glass full of wine, drank it down; refilled and lighted his pipe, and, lounging back in his chair, fell into a musing mood, as he watched the curling smoke ascend.

"John Gage is a royally good fellow," he ruminated; "too squeamish and fanatical about a little good cheer; but he is a true friend—pure gold, through and through. I must in some way help him in that

love affair. I am half persuaded that the girl has discovered Jack's worth, and really loves him. If I can only convince him that he has a chance, he will overcome his scruples and propose. Ah! an idea occurs to me: The Fortune-teller might serve a good turn in this matter. I will see him on my way to Corinth and try to arrange a plan to both surprise and delight my friend."

CHAPTER III.

THE ENTERTAINMENT.

“Would ye serve your home, your God, your race,
And share in the rewards of infinite grace?
Would ye care to have a part in the endless love
Of God and angels in the realms above?
Then shun the cup, and turn from the brink
Where others fall through the curse of drink.”

—*Anonymous.*

ON Friday afternoon St. Clair procured a horse and buggy and set out for Corinth. He made an early start in order to have ample time to carry out his project of visiting the Fortune-teller. Only a short distance from Corinth, and near to the road over which St. Clair was passing, rose a high cliff. On the summit, hidden from view by trees and tangled undergrowth, was a rude log house. The place had been untenanted for some time, and only within a month had rumor announced an occupant in the person of a singular character, who was designated as the Almanac Fortune-teller by those who had visited the place. The object of one of his profession in selecting such a location could not be surmised. The inquisitive received no satisfaction. He was willing to tell the fortunes of others, but would tell nothing con-

cerning himself. Following the road which gradually ascended to the top of the elevation, St. Clair reached the door of the cabin, which was promptly opened in answer to his knock. He was startled by the marvelously strange appearance of both the apartment and its occupant; but, as the reader will have a full description of what he saw, later on, suffice it now to record that the visitor, after about half an hour's conversation with the inmate, emerged from the house with a well satisfied smile on his face. Evidently, whatever scheme he had in view promised success, so far as the Fortune-teller was concerned. Descending to the main road, he soon entered the town of Corinth and sought out his friend, Harry Thorne. He was heartily welcomed at Mr. Thorne's home. After supper they went together to the large hall, where the entertainment was to be given. Mr. Thorne, being master of ceremonies for the evening, provided his friend with a desirable seat and repaired to the platform.

St. Clair soon discovered that the audience room would be filled to its utmost capacity. The enthusiasm of Harry Thorne and Frank Burton had caused the occasion to be generally talked about. All the church congregations, social clubs and the public in general had been invited and urged to attend, and by the time the first number on the program was announced not only every seat but every foot of standing room was occupied.

"Strange," mused St. Clair to himself, "what enthusiasm Harry and his associates have about their

temperance hobby. I know I shall be bored to death, but I can afford to be a martyr to temperance fanaticism for a little while, in view of the bottle of fine old Bourbon, stowed away under my buggy seat, to solace myself with on the ride home."

With complacent resignation he listened to the opening instrumental quartette, then to the brief address of Rev. Dr. Colyar and a vocal solo; and was only aroused to a livelier interest when Robert Triston recited the following selection:

"AN ALLEGORY.

"In a dream I saw a beautiful home, rich and elegant in all its adornments within and without. It nestled in the midst of a lovely garden, all luxuriant in its wealth of fruit and flowers. In the bright sunlight, pebbled walks gleamed and glistened like gems, as in tasteful curves they led here and there to sylvan bowers. The dwelling and its surroundings made a scene of rare taste and beauty. I saw that the heart of love had planned and the hand of affection had reared it. The trees, the plants, the flowers, the walks, in their wonderful arrangement and exquisite harmony, exhausted all power to beautify further, and appeared like a cluster of jewels around the cozy dwelling. Entranced, I gazed upon the surpassing loveliness. Surely, I thought, this is a fairy's home. I drew near and looked within. Ah, could it be? *This* the home of mortals! Yes, seated there by the cheerful hearth was a man of noble form and kindly face, and a woman of grace and beauty, and playing around them

a bright-eyed, beautiful child. They were talking of their happy home. Their eyes fondly rested upon each other, and love beamed from every lineament of their faces as they talked together and tenderly caressed the lovely pledge of their plighted faith. I heard them say, 'Can any of earth be so happy as we?' And the gentle zephyrs murmuring through the luxuriant foliage at the open window seemed to whisper, 'None more happy; none more happy.'

"Then in my dream I saw an angel standing by me. I asked him, 'Has heaven any brighter scenes than this?' And he said, 'Come and see.' Away to the vast empyreal sphere we soared, onward and onward, upward and upward toward the celestial gate. The angel bore me on with the speed of light. I learned that heaven was far away from earth. Ere we reached the sunny slope of the heavenly paradise a year and more had passed. We stood within the shadow of the sapphire walls, and I knocked at the gate of pearl; but quick the angel grasped my hand and bore me swift away. 'Thou art mortal and must not enter there,' he said. 'I brought thee here that thou mightst have but a single glimpse of celestial life.' Though far away and fast receding, the light streaming out through the opening gate dazzled and blinded with its ineffable brightness; yet I saw unutterable things, and felt in its fullness that 'eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive of heaven's loveliness.' And the angel said to me, 'All this beauty fades not, and the brightness dims not—it is the same that 'was, and is, and ever shall be, the

same yesterday, to-day, and forever.' Now we journey to earth, to the spot whence we came, and thou shalt learn that earth changes, though heaven does not.'

"On earth I stood again, just as the evening shades were falling. But surely, I thought, this is not the spot whence I journeyed, yet the angel said it was, ere he vanished. The walks now were grass-grown and unswept; the garden rank with weeds; the plants and flowers faded and withering; the trees broken and dying, and the once elegant dwelling, uncared for, decaying and crumbling away.

"As the shadows of night deepened around me I seemed to hear voices of awful solemnity. The winds sadly sighed through the branches of the neighboring forest, and wafted to my ears the mournful hoot of the owl; and in the distance I could hear the fierce howl of the prowling wolf. Again I stood by the same window. It was uncurtained now, and the creeping vine with its luxuriant foliage was gone. I looked within. Oh, God, the change! The walls and floors were bare; the hearth cold and cheerless; but the occupants the same, yet oh, how different! The man's once noble form was now bowed and broken, and the kindly face bleared and bloated. The wife's once graceful form was now bent and faltering. Deep furrows of woe now marked where the lines of beauty had traced. And the child was ragged and gaunt, with face unwashed and hair uncombed. I gazed upon this awful change in speechless dismay. Hark! the fierce growl of the wolf sounded louder and nearer—again nearer—nearer

still. Midnight of impenetrable darkness without—a frail flickering taper making light and shadow within. Louder and louder grew the howl of the wolf; it seemed circling round and round the dwelling, drawing nearer and nearer and nearer. At times its footsteps on the leaves and twigs were distinctly heard. Then I saw that the inmates heard the approach of the ravenous beast. The man's haggard, bloated face worked convulsively, and the bloodshot eyes gleamed with the light of an awful frenzy. The woman crouched in mortal agony at the door, a nameless despair on her face, and holding tightly to her breast the now frightened, horrified child. The man was gazing toward the door. I saw that the lock and latch were broken. A low growl and the stealthy tread of the wolf were heard at the door. The man was powerless to move; an awful tremor shook his frame and an unearthly light burned in his eyes. Slowly the door was pushed open and the long, gaunt form of the wolf entered. It advanced with grinning teeth and glaring eyes. As it crouched for the fatal spring he uttered a cry of horror—then the wife sprang toward him with clasped hands and imploring look. In his awful frenzy he struck her a deadly blow. I saw her lying there with the look of unspeakable agony on her face. Then he, stooping, seized his child and hurled it into the open jaws of the ravenous beast, and I heard the crunching out of the young life. Then the yell of a maniac pierced my very soul as the man bounded by me through the window and disappeared in the darkness of an impenetrable and eternal night.

"I awoke and knew that this was the work of rum."

The effect produced by the recitation was startling. As the young orator, with vivid, dramatic intonation of voice and appropriate gesture described the wolf prowling round and round the house and entering the door of the doomed home, the auditors seemed to actually see the ferocious beast; and when the cry of the madman rang out like a shriek of a lost soul, the effect was thrilling beyond description. The audience seemed terror-stricken. All over the hall could be heard the deep-drawn breaths of frightened suspense, and St. Clair felt the cold sensation of an indefinable fear creeping at the roots of his hair.

"Why, Dante's *Inferno*," he muttered to himself, "scarcely furnishes a more dreadful picture. And how much is told in so short a story—property, home, love, noble manhood, lovely womanhood, innocent childhood, all ruined by drink—and sadder still, the immortal soul plunged into remediless darkness. Ah, I begin to feel that the enthusiasm, or fanaticism, as I have called it, of Harry Thorne has more basis than I have been wont to recognize."

The painful silence was gently broken by soft, sweet strains of music from the instrumental quartet.

As the music ceased, all eyes were fixed on the platform, for the program now announced "A Recitation by Miss Katie Gardiner." Special curiosity was aroused, both to see and to hear the "new arrival." The large attendance was in great part due to the rumors quietly circulated by Mr. Thorne and his associates in the band that Miss Gardiner was not only

beautiful in person, but also an accomplished elocutionist. When invited to take a number on the program, she had expressed a willingness to do so, if she could find a selection suitable for such an occasion, and Harry Thorne had requested, as a special compliment to him, that she recite a simple little poem of his own composition which he had dedicated to the band.

Miss Gardiner promptly and gracefully made her appearance on the platform. At the first glance unusual interest manifested itself in the face of St. Clair. His gaze betokened astonishment and admiration. She seemed to his ardent, beauty-loving nature a revelation of grace and loveliness. Her personal presence was striking. She was medium in height, with dark-brown hair, brilliant brown eyes, fair complexion and rosy cheeks. There was an indescribable expression of intellectuality and power in her face and manner. Her sweet smile as she bowed to the audience captivated every beholder.

"She is marvelously beautiful," thought St. Clair. In a voice of rich and rare compass, clear as a bell, and with every tone melodious she recited the following poem:

THE CURSE OF DRINK.

"Would ye shrink from the vile haunts of disgrace
And see not the agony in friends' loving face?
Would ye turn from the dens of infamy and woe
And mingle not with the degraded and low?
Then shun the cup, and turn from the brink
Where others fall through the curse of drink,

Would ye seek honest face and feature,
And most admired be by fellow creature?
Would ye be lithe of limb, bright of eye,
And fearless stand before great and high?
Then shun the cup, and turn from the brink
Where others fall through the curse of drink.

Would ye be pure, and free and great,
Crowned with honor's high estate?
Would ye strive to other's burdens bear,
And rescue them from the tempter's snare?
Then shun the cup, and turn from the brink
Where others fall through the curse of drink.

Would ye save from deep and dark despair
A mother's heart, and her sweetest blessings share?
Would ye hear a father's noblest praise
Ever ringing to your latest days?
Then shun the cup, and turn from the brink
Where others fall through the curse of drink.

Would ye serve your home, your God, your race,
And share in the rewards of infinite grace?
Would ye care to have a part in the endless love
Of God and angels in the realms above?
Then shun the cup, and turn from the brink
Where others fall through the curse of drink.

Would ye wish a mansion in the city of gold,
Prepared by the Master with grandeur untold?
Would ye rest 'neath the shade of life's tree,
Clothed in the robes of immortality?
Then shun the cup, and turn from the brink
Where others fall through the curse of drink.

Would ye wish for a kingly jewel to wear,
A scepter to wield, a crown to bear?
Would ye dwell in the realms bright and fair,
Of which we're told, "No drunkard is there?"
Then shun the cup, and turn from the brink
Where others fall through the curse of drink.

The piece afforded very little scope for elocutionary talent, yet the perfect interpretation given to every line and the complete change of emphasis and expression in each of the seven repetitions of the refrain, made it clear that she possessed great power as a reader.

The earnest pleading words of the poem, when interpreted with such sweet and persuasive force, was well fitted to follow the intensely dramatic deliverance of the eloquent young lawyer. It softened the agitated feelings, yet emphasized the effect. Recognizing this, she bowed her acknowledgments for the hearty encore and declined to make a second appearance.

CHAPTER IV.

A MOONLIGHT RIDE.

“Some positive, persisting fools we know,
Who if once wrong, will needs be always so;
But you with pleasure own your errors past,
And make each day a critique on the last.”

—*Pope.*

“It is the unexpected that always happens,” mused St. Clair, as he rode homeward that night. “I thought I should be bored to death, yet I never was more interested in my life. Yes, the unexpected, above all things, has happened to-night. I have seen my ideal. She answers to every dream and fancy of my soul. Although she is unknown to me, still I feel that her image is indelibly stamped upon my heart. I may never win a smile of welcome from her peerless face, yet I know her image will abide with me always. I felt the arrow pierce. Strange! Strange! I came against my will. It seemed folly to respond to Harry’s invitation, and I know not why I came. Who knows what is to happen? Ah, who knows? Another may win the heart I covet—for aught I know may already hold that heart enthralled, yet mine is hers for all time. What is this mysterious, subtle influence that unbidden

steals over the heart? I feel its power and recognize that it is irresistible."

It was a beautiful moonlight night, and the spirited horse was moving rapidly along the smooth turnpike. St. Clair, wrapped in his troubled thoughts, was unconscious of time until aroused by the barking of a dog. He looked up and observed that he was passing the Barnard residence.

"Half way home," he said. Then suddenly the thought flashed on his mind of the solace he had provided for his return ride.

"Curse the bottle," he muttered, "I hear now the sweet, pleading tones of that matchless voice, saying,

'Would ye be pure, and free and great
Crowned with honors high estate? . . .
Then shun the cup, and turn from the brink
Where others fall through the curse of drink.'

While I remember that inspired face, and no time can efface it, I will shun the cup as I would an adder's sting."

Reaching under the seat he pulled out the bottle of old Bourbon, and half rising he hurled it on the rocks at the side of the road. The crash startled the horse and caused it to spring forward, jerking the lines over the dash-board. St. Clair, in moving forward to recover the lines, lost his balance, and as the horse swerved to one side, he was thrown violently to the ground. The now thoroughly frightened horse dashed furiously along the pike.

A vehicle which had come into the pike about a

mile ahead was coming in the direction to meet the runaway. The occupants were John Gage, his sister and Lena Barnard, returning from the spelling bee. Hearing the noise of the approaching steed, they hastily turned their carriage to one side, and the runaway flew by them.

"Great heavens!" exclaimed John Gage, "that was St. Clair's horse, and the buggy is empty. He must have been thrown out, and perhaps is killed."

While saying this he was laying whip to his horse, urging him to full speed, with the desire to render earliest assistance possible in case of accident to his friend.

When about three-quarters of a mile had been traversed, they saw an object lying by the roadside, which in the bright moonlight was easily recognized at some distance as the form of a man. In a moment John Gage was kneeling at the side of his friend.

"He is unconscious, but not dead. He may not be seriously hurt."

Both the young ladies had alighted quickly, anxious to render any assistance in their power. St. Clair's head was lifted from the hard rocks and placed on a cushion seat from the carriage. While Gage was examining to see if any bones were broken, a deep-drawn breath and groan escaped the lips of St. Clair, and a slight movement of his body indicated returning consciousness. Slowly he opened his eyes and gazed vacantly around.

"Where am I?" he asked.

"You are with friends. You were thrown from

your buggy, but, I trust, not seriously injured," replied Gage.

"Ah! I remember; I was thrown out just as the horse started, and I guess I am only stunned. With your help, I think I can get up."

Carefully assisting him to his feet and half carrying him, Gage placed him in the carriage. As it was only a few hundred yards to Mr. Gage's home they soon arrived there, and every attention was given for St. Clair's comfort.

It was readily discovered that no great injury had been sustained, and that even the attendance of a physician was unnecessary. A few days' quiet and rest was all that was required to restore him from the effects of the contusion and shock produced by the fall.

The following morning there was some commotion in the bank at Memphis.

"Where is Mr. St. Clair?" asked the principal bank officer. "It is long past the hour for him to be at his desk."

"He is not likely to arrive very soon," replied one of the clerks, with a knowing look.

"You appear to have information, Mr. Clark. Will you please explain?"

"Mr. St. Clair rode over in a buggy yesterday evening to Corinth to attend a temperance meeting. The horse and buggy came back last night; the former was badly crippled, and the latter smashed to pieces. It appears to have been a runaway, and Mr. St. Clair was thrown out. He was found by Mr. John Gage

and taken to his father's house, which was near the place of accident."

"I am sorry to hear this. I hope his injuries are not serious," said the bank officer, kindly.

"Not very, I believe," replied Mr. Clark, who was next in position to Mr. St. Clair, and was willing, if he could, to get him out of his way of promotion. "One in his condition does not usually get hurt much in a fall."

"What do you mean?" inquired the banker. "I knew that St. Clair took a drink occasionally, but I never heard of his indulging to excess. What evidence have you of his being in the condition you suggest?"

"Before starting to Corinth he procured a good-sized bottle of whiskey, and those who went out on the road, after the horse came in, to see what had become of his owner, found the empty bottle near the spot where the accident occurred. The horse, though spirited, is very gentle, and it is presumed that if St. Clair had been himself no accident could have happened."

The empty bottle was not found—only the fragments of one, the contents of which were soaked in the ground, and not in the body of Mr. St. Clair; but the exact truth does not always find expression when stories are repeated. Whether Mr. Clark stated it as he heard it, or put it in this way designedly, is not known. At all events, St. Clair must pay the penalty of suspicion for having the bottle with him. Gage had sent word to the bank at an early hour, explaining the absence of St. Clair, but Mr. Clark did not

mention this message, as he had previously heard of the accident, and preferred to give his own version.

At the time the banker was receiving the information, or rather misinformation, just recorded, St. Clair was sitting in an easy chair in the room assigned him at Mr. Gage's house. He was stiff and sore, with a few slight bruises; otherwise, none the worse for the mishap of the previous night. John Gage had gone at an early hour to his place of employment, and his friend, for a time, was left to the company of his own thoughts.

"Here is a pretty howdy do!" he soliloquized. "A few hours ago I was fancy free; now brown eyes haunt me continually. Yesterday I laughed at Harry Thorne's temperance notions; to-day, I am a sworn teetotaler. Perhaps the best act of my life was that of dashing the bottle to pieces on the ground, yet its destruction came near causing my own. Surely, it was commendable to attend a temperance meeting, but it has resulted in a heart wound from which I may never recover. Certainly, it was praiseworthy to throw away the bottle, but it has occasioned much damage to my horse and buggy, and many aches and pains to my body. Ah, well! I am content to accept the results."

His soliloquy was interrupted by the arrival of visitors. Miss Barnard came across to inquire about the patient, and St. Clair's brother James, to whom word of the accident had been sent, arrived at the same time. They were delighted to find that the mishap had resulted in so little harm.

Lizzie Gage, who came into the room with the visitors, had known St. Clair since childhood. Seeing that the consequences of the accident were trivial, she began to tease him about the occurrence.

"I was so frightened last night," she said, "that I did not think to smell your breath, Harvey; but any one can see how it happened. Don't you think, Lena, that it is a great shame for a young man to attend a temperance meeting and go home in such a condition? If I were you, James, I wouldn't own such a brother."

"Oh, it is shocking!" cried Lena.

"Very disgraceful, indeed!" said James; "but you know there is always one black sheep in every flock."

Miss Gage did not dream that her words were in keeping with the guilty intentions of the homeward ride. John Gage never spoke a disparaging word of a friend, and his sister did not know of his anxious fears about St. Clair's tipling habits. She was not even aware that he took a drink at all.

"It does look bad," replied Harvey, with a faint smile, "and I am thankful that my life was spared, giving me a chance to repent."

"I am not so sure," she answered with an "Aunty Doleful" look on her face, "that such a mercy will be granted you. People who are thrown violently head foremost on the rocks nearly always die; and if they don't die their brain is affected. When they look out of their eyes as you do now, it is almost sure to end in permanent imbecility. Ah, me! there was Sam Dodge who fell out of the wagon when he was drunk;

he died the next day; and there was old Pat. Lacey, who staggered off the bridge; he has been in the asylum ever since. It is a great mercy, in your sad plight, that you have me at hand to cheer you up a little."

All laughed heartily, not so much at the words as at the counterfeit expression of seriousness, and the comically doleful tone in which they were uttered.

"I see you are all of one mind as to the cause of the accident, so I will make a full confession. I was intoxicated, and the bewildered condition of my mind brought about what would not have otherwise occurred."

St. Clair uttered these words in a serious tone, which caused his friends to look at each other in amazement.

"But do not censure me too severely," he continued, changing his voice to a light, jesting tone, "until you have heard the whole of my confession. My sad condition was the result of an intoxication from love, and not from liquor. Not a drop of any kind of spirits had passed by lips, but the spirit of love had passed into my heart, and, while so possessed, I was reckless enough to frighten my horse and drop the lines."

"It is even worse than I supposed," said Lizzie, with a smile. "That kind of intoxication is likely to have permanent effects."

"Oh, I am deeply interested now," said Lena. "Your confession has only just begun. Tell us all about the 'bewitching bright eyes and love at first

sight' that had such a wonderful effect upon one we have heretofore regarded as quite matter-of-fact and unimpressible."

St. Clair, thus urged, gave a full account of the entertainment at Corinth. He spoke of Robert Triston's fine effort, and also in high praise of the beauty and accomplishments of Miss Gardiner, as displayed in the part she had taken. He was careful, however, to create the impression in the minds of his hearers that he was simply gratified and delighted to have had the privilege of hearing an elocutionist of rare talent. His reference to the intoxication from love they understood as a pleasantry, as he intended they should.

"You must arrange soon to take Lizzie and me on a trip to Corinth, and introduce us to this rare divinity of yours," said Miss Barnard.

"It would afford me great pleasure to do so, but, unfortunately, I was not introduced myself. I left immediately at the close of the exercises, and perhaps I may never have the honor of worshipping this divinity, except at a distance," replied St. Clair, while in his heart he resolved that nothing should prevent his obtaining an introduction at the earliest day possible.

CHAPTER V.

THE CABIN ON THE CLIFF.

“Thers are ten thousand tones and signs,
We hear and see, but none defines—
Involuntary sparks of thought,
Which strike from out the heart o’er wrought,
And form a strange intelligence,
Alike mysterious and intense—
Which link the burning chain that binds,
Without their will, young hearts and minds ;
Conveying as the electric wire,
We know not how, the absorbing fire.”

—*Byron.*

WHEN Lena Barnard arose to leave, Miss Gage accompanied her to the door, leaving James St. Clair in the room alone with his brother.

“James, I wish you to aid me in a scheme I have planned concerning our friend, John Gage. I do not know what the outcome will be, but it will afford amusement if nothing else. Your part in the scheme will consist in making an engagement to take Miss Gage to spend Monday evening with Miss Barnard. You can ask one of your friends to call there. I suggest Herman Clark, as he is well acquainted at Barnard’s, and will be sure to go if you ask him. Soon

after assembling at the house, propose a visit to the fortune-teller. The girls are very anxious to go, and will be delighted to accept the invitation. Now, James, do not mention this matter to any one, but do just as I indicate. Let it appear to your companion and both the ladies that the idea of visiting the fortune-teller only occurred to you at the moment you suggest it. To everybody except ourselves the occurrences of Monday evening must appear purely accidental. Now go and make the engagement for yourself and friend, and when you return I will explain fully and satisfy all your curiosity as to the object in view."

"All right, brother; I will obey instructions to the letter, and strive very hard to prevent failure on my part of the scheme."

Early in the evening of the Monday following James St. Clair appeared in pursuance of his appointment with the young ladies. John Gage, who had just reached home from the store, proposed to accompany them, but was informed by his sister that Lena had an engagement that evening with another young gentleman.

"May I inquire," said John, with a disappointed look, "who the favored one is?"

"He is Mr. Herman Clark, of whom I think you have not a very favorable opinion."

"I confess I do not like him. There is something about him which arouses distrust in my mind. Yet I do not wish to speak harm of him. He is handsome and quite popular. He and St. Clair are em-

ployed in the same bank, but I have never asked Harvey's opinion of him. Once I mentioned to you that his manner impressed me as insincere. Well, I must not be envious of his good fortune in cutting me out of Miss Barnard's company to-night."

John Gage was a noble type of manhood. Honest, sincere and generous, he was unwilling to wrong another, even in thought. His intuition, however, was very accurate, for his refined, sensitive nature felt the slightest vibration of dishonor or insincerity when manifested in the tone or manner of those around him. He knew that Mr. Clark was well acquainted with Miss Barnard and occasionally visited her, but jealousy had no part in coloring his estimation of Clark's character.

On entering the room where St. Clair was seated reading a book, he abruptly accosted him with the question:

"What is your impression of the character of Herman Clark? I have just been led to express an unfavorable opinion of him to my sister, and I would regret doing an injustice to anyone. Tell me your judgment of his real character."

"I will answer you frankly. Mr. Clark is polite, courteous and accomplished, and affects a high regard for morality, but I have seen enough in little things to incline me to the opinion that he is false at heart and treacherous. I have never spoken about him before, but as you asked a direct question I have given a direct answer. Now let us change the subject. This would be a good time for us to visit the fortune-teller,

You know we agreed some time ago to investigate, and if it promised well then to take your sister and Miss Barnard."

"Are you well enough for the trip?"

"Yes, indeed. My three days' rest has cured all aches and pains, and I feel that a little exercise is needed."

"All right, then, we will go at once."

In less than an hour the two young men arrived at the door of the lonely cabin on the cliff. Entering, they found the fortune-teller seated behind a long, narrow table that stretched nearly across the room. Just behind him a curtain was suspended from ceiling to floor, evidently shutting from view of visitors his sleeping apartment. In front of the table was considerable space, containing a few chairs for the accommodation of patrons. On the table, to the right of the fortune-teller's seat or throne, was a pedestal on which was perched an immense owl. On the table to the left was stacked a great pile of almanacs, and, besides, the whole of the long table, except immediately in front of the chair, was covered with almanacs of every size, color and description. There appeared to be almanacs from the year one down to the present. Some were in manuscript, with strange hieroglyphics, made long before the art of printing was known. Spread out on the table in front of the seer's seat was a large map or chart of the stars and planets. It was full of mysterious looking symbols, signs, figures and images painted in various colors. On either side of this map sat a stuffed monkey, each

holding a brass candlestick in which was burning a tallow candle. Behind the center of the table was an immense chair, seat or throne, if we may so term it, covered with the skins of wild animals. On each arm of the chair was the skin of a leopard, with the head, life-like in appearance, resting on the extremity of each arm. Over one post of the chair was thrown the skin of a hyena, over the other that of a panther—the life-like head at the top of each post. The back of the chair was two feet higher than the head of the occupant.

At the time the young men entered, this strange-looking seat was occupied by the most grotesque figure imaginable. The face not covered by beard was colorless, the features sharp, the eyes deep-set and piercing. The hair was long, falling below the shoulders. He was arrayed in a loose-fitting, wine-colored gown, fastened with cord and tassel. On his head was a cone-shaped red cap a foot in height, from the top of which waved a white plume; around the base of the cap was a wide blue band. His hands were long and bony and almost transparently white. In his right hand he held a green-colored rod, curiously shaped and elaborately carved. The dim, flickering light from the candles, falling on the dark skins of the monkeys and their grinning teeth, and on the strange occupant of the chair, and throwing shadows around the other weird objects in the room, produced a startling effect upon the beholder.

As our two friends approached the table, a quick glance of recognition passed between St. Clair and

the fortune-teller which was not observed by Gage. St. Clair appeared as much surprised and interested in the spectacle as one would in witnessing it for the first time.

"You come to have the mysteries of the future unfolded?" asked the fortune-teller.

"Yes," replied St. Clair. My friend will first invoke the voice of the oracle. We suppose an introduction or announcement of our names is unnecessary to one who reads all things in the pages of his own occult science."

"It is," replied the seer. "I do not ask to know who you are or from whence you come. I have only to consult the mystic arts of my profession to know the origin, present history and future destiny of all who seek such revelations."

Mr. Gage advanced to the table and was asked to state the day, month and year in which he was born. The fortune-teller made a careful note of the date and then selected a certain almanac from the table. After examining it for a moment, he intently studied the chart. While he was thus engaged, St. Clair was on the alert for any sound of approaching visitors. Suddenly he exclaimed:

"I hear voices. We do not wish to be seen here. Have you any way to hide us from observation until the newcomers depart?"

"Yes," replied the seer. "Come around the table and go behind the curtain. You can seat yourselves on my cot, where you will be comfortable, and at the

same time free from observation of any who may enter here."

This had all been arranged by St. Clair in his former visit. Grasping the arm of his friend, he hurried him around the table and behind the curtain. They found a comfortable seat on a narrow bed, and while they themselves were in the dark, could plainly see, through apertures in the curtain, everything in the room. They were scarcely ensconced in their secreted position when James St. Clair, Lizzie Gage, Herman Clark and Lena Barnard were admitted into the room. At first the ladies were frightened at the gruesome appearance of the hut and its occupant, but presently accepting the assurances of their escorts that there was nothing to fear, they entered into the spirit of the occasion with zest.

Considerable parley ensued as to who would first consult the oracle. Miss Barnard was finally prevailed upon to take the lead.

It is not our purpose to disparage the prophetic acumen of the wonderful being whose appearance and surroundings we have just described, but we must remind the reader that the former visit of Harvey St. Clair was for the special purpose of directing the prophetic mind of the seer to reveal certain things.

The fortune-teller handed Miss Barnard a slip of paper and requested her to write the exact date of her birth. In deference to a well-defined courtesy always extended to ladies, he did not ask her to state aloud the information desired, as he had done with Mr. Gage. On looking at what she had written, he tore up the

slip and then began to search among his almanacs. Selecting one, he consulted it for an instant and then turned his eyes upon the map of stars and planets before him. Presently he handed to her the green colored rod, on the end of which was fixed, by means of a socket, a red lead pencil.

“Turn your back to the table,” he said, “and point the rod over your right shoulder. I will place the point on the star that was in the ascendancy at your birth. Now while I hold the point down, do not move intentionally, but for the space of one minute you must think wholly of the one you love best.”

He took out his watch and held it for sixty seconds, while with his other hand he held the point of the rod lightly on the chart. Whether he moved this hand or not, it was not discernible to those looking on. Certain it was, however, that as soon as the minute was over and all gathered around to examine the map there was plainly marked on it the letters “J. G.”

“You thought of the one you loved best,” cried James St. Clair, “and there are the initials ‘J. G.’ plain as print. Who can it be? The ‘J.’ would stand for James, but the ‘G’ won’t do for St. Clair.”

“Oh, it does not mean anything,” exclaimed Miss Barnard with a blushing face; “it is an accident or a trick.”

“My child,” said the fortune-teller solemnly, “do not offend the gods by styling their work as an accident or a trick. I discern your horoscope so clearly that I can minutely describe the one who is king in your heart.”

"I do not believe it. You never saw me before and can know nothing of my heart's secrets. Such things are not revealed," exclaimed Miss Barnard.

"It is true that I never saw you before, yet the revelations of your horoscope make all the mysteries of your life clear to me. As a test, will you acknowledge the truth if I accurately describe the one you love best?"

"Yes," she said boldly, "for if I love any one, neither you nor any one else knows it."

"Very well. Listen and I will read the writing of the stars. The one you love is now twenty-four years of age. He is little under the medium in height, slender in frame, yet healthful and active in appearance. His eyes are of light steel gray color, hair and complexion approaching the sandy, yet almost too fair to be so termed. He is very bashful and diffident, but honest, sincere and generous, unwilling to wrong any one even in thought. He is not to say handsome, but has a pleasant face, one on which honor and purity are plainly stamped. Such is the general appearance and such is the character of the one on whom your affections are placed; else the signs and symbols before me speak falsely."

Harvey St. Clair felt the cot shake, and looking at his friend saw he was greatly agitated. The perspiration was streaming down his face and anxiety was pictured on his countenance as he watched the effect of the fortune-teller's words on Miss Barnard. John Gage in his modesty would not have recognized the character described, but he knew that the age, height,

build, color of eyes, hair and complexion did not answer for any other young man in all that section.

As the fortune-teller finished he raised his eyes to those of Miss Barnard. She clapped her hands to her burning face, wheeled around and rushed toward the door.

"You have answered," said the seer. At this moment a sound of voices was heard at the door, and presently there entered Harry Thorne, Miss Katie Gardiner, Frank Burton and Miss Rose German.

"Say, Gage," whispered Harvey St. Clair, "there comes the idol of my heart. How strange that all of us should have chosen the same night for a visit here. Look, John, at the one with Harry Thorne; isn't she divine?"

But John had no eyes or thoughts for any one except Miss Barnard, after the confession she had just made. The fortune-teller, however, being very close to the curtain heard Mr. St. Clair's words, and quickly resolved to give him a surprise when telling the fortune of the "divine" newcomer.

As Harry Thorne and James St. Clair were old acquaintances an introduction of all the parties at once took place. A general conversation was carried on for a few minutes, and then it was decided to continue the consultations with the fortune-teller. They had come for a frolic, without any belief in the ability of the seer to forecast the future. Yet in almost every one there is an element of superstition, and the feelings are invariably swayed to some extent even by what is only pretended predictions when disclosures are made of

things considered unknown to others. The reader understands that the former secret visit of Harvey St. Clair enabled the fortune-teller to make the revelations he had concerning Miss Barnard. She, however, as well as John Gage, was in ignorance of this, and both were greatly astonished. Had she known that John Gage was present and had witnessed the confession made by her confusion the results would have been disastrous to his hopes.

At length Miss Gardiner's turn came. As has been mentioned, the fortune-teller had overheard enough of St. Clair's whispered conversation to his companion in concealment to understand that he was unknown to Miss Gardiner and yet that he had fallen in love with her at first sight. Being very quick-witted, he determined to surprise the one who had planned a surprise for his friend by accurately describing him to Miss Gardiner as the lover who would in time appear as her accepted suitor.

Pursuing his usual course of consulting the almanac and then the chart, he proceeded to interpret the mysteries of the horoscope.

"You are just approaching the period of your life," he said, "when the most interesting and important events are to transpire. The one you will love and the one by whom you will be loved is shortly to cross your path. Through the agency of my mysterious art, I can describe the one who is to be the hero of your heart."

The young lady smiled incredulously. A feeling of love for any suitor had never dawned upon her, and

she felt sure that any description given would be only a fancy, scarcely worth listening to.

"He is of fine personal appearance," continued the seer, apparently reading from the chart as his fingers traced the strange signs and symbols, "nearly six feet in height, and well proportioned. He has dark hair, fair complexion, wears full beard and mustache, has regular features and deep blue eyes. Such is the general appearance of the one with whose destiny your fortunes are to be associated. I see signs of trouble overshadowing your life, but there appears light behind the shadows, which augurs a happy conclusion after a while."

Harvey St. Clair listened in amazement. He realized that the words gave a general description of himself, but, knowing that the young lady had never seen him, he could not hope for a confession such as occurred in the case of Miss Barnard.

Miss Gardiner, gayly laughing, exclaimed:

"Can you not give me his name also, so that I can make no mistake? I understand that, before our arrival, you gave some initials to Miss Barnard."

"It is not impossible," gravely responded the seer, "that the same may be done in your case. Take this rod and point it over your shoulder. I will place the point on the spot where the signs of the Zodiac indicate the merging of your destiny with that of the one described. The invisible powers will control your involuntary motions and those of my hand, and perchance the revelation desired may be vouchsafed."

She did as directed. The fortune-teller seemed to

close his eyes and raised his left hand towards the heavens. The point of the rod appeared to move slightly for an instant, and then his hand dropped and he removed the point from the chart. Eagerly all bent down to see what signs, if any, had been traced. The letters "H. S. C." were so distinct that each one of the party read them the same way at once. The letters S. and C. were written close together, but the the three capitals, H. S. C., were quite legible.

While a lively conversation was being carried on over the fortune just foretold, one of the party, Herman Clark, was silent and thoughtful. His eyes eagerly sought the face of Miss Gardiner, and the interest manifested in his look and manner was very marked. He was evidently deeply impressed, and had given the closest attention to the words of the fortune-teller. This was not noticed by any of his companions, but Harvey St. Clair and John Gage, from their place of concealment, had full view of everyone in the room. They both observed Clark's looks and actions. St. Clair said to himself, "I shall have a rival," and Gage said to himself, "I shall be relieved of a rival."

Harvey St. Clair understood from the description given of Miss Gardiner's coming lover and from the initials written on the map that the fortune-teller was amusing himself at his expense; but he was not at all displeased, and mentally resolved to use every means to keep the fact of his presence in the room from being found out. If he could bribe the seer, he well knew that Gage, the only other person who knew, had very

urgent reasons for keeping their situation a profound secret.

One very singular coincidence escaped the notice of St. Clair. In fact, it was not observed by anyone present. The general description of Miss Gardiner's prospective lover applied as closely to Mr. Clark as it did to Mr. St. Clair. No one would ever think of any resemblance between these two, yet both had blue eyes, were very nearly of same height and weight, wore full beard and mustache, and the initials or capital letters of their names were the same.

Clark was startled at the description and initials, since he recognized them as fitting himself, but no thought of St. Clair or anyone else in reference to the matter occurred to him. While the others were merrily talking over their experiences of the evening, he took from his pocket one of his visiting cards, wrote on the back of it the exact words used by the fortune-teller, and at the close put in brackets the words, "For initials see other side." Approaching Miss Gardiner, he smilingly said:

"You doubtless wish to preserve so important a revelation as that to which you have just listened. I have written on this card the substance of the seer's words. Take and keep it for future reference."

"Thank you, sir," she replied, taking the card. Without looking at it, she pinned it to her dress for safe-keeping.

CHAPTER VI.

AN UNEXPECTED RESULT.

“Oh ! colder than the wind that freezes
Founts, that but now in sunshine play’d,
Is that congealing pang, which seizes
The trusting bosom when betrayed.”
—*Moore*,

“An open foe may prove a curse
But a pretended friend is worse.”
—*Gay's Fables*.

ON the following morning Harvey St. Clair appeared at the bank. He had sent word that his accident would prevent his attention to business for three or four days. On entering the bank he was told that the president wished to see him in his private office. It was with no misgivings that he immediately confronted the head bank official, but his reception was quite formal, and very different from the usual cordiality displayed towards him.

“I regret to say, Mr. St. Clair,” said the president, coldly, “that during your absence certain changes have been made in the positions of employees, and that another has been assigned to the place you occupied.”

“This action, sir, seems very sudden. My absence was brief and unavoidable.”

"In one sense unavoidable, but in another possibly not so."

"I do not understand you, sir."

"It is certainly due to you that I make my meaning clear, and will speak frankly. Information has come to me that your trip to Corinth was simply a drinking spree, and that the casualty occurring was but a natural result of the condition you were in."

"The information, sir, is false. I did not drink a drop on that day or night."

"It is only natural that you should deny it. But will you also deny that you have for some time constantly kept a supply of wine in your room for use of yourself and visitors; and will you deny that just prior to starting for Corinth you purchased a bottle of whiskey?"

"No, sir, I will not deny that, but"—

"Never mind the 'buts'—the matter is settled. In lieu of any notice of discharge, the coming month's salary will be paid you without requiring any further services."

"Will you tell me the source of your information?"

"I think it unnecessary to do so. You have admitted the main points of the statements made concerning you."

"Very well. I bid you good-day, sir," and St. Clair, boiling with indignation, strode from the room. As he passed through the bank he observed that Herman Clark was occupying the position he had formerly held.

On reaching his room St. Clair threw himself into

a chair and gave himself up to thought. He was greatly agitated by the sudden and unexpected experience through which he had just passed. In a short time the agitation subsided, and he was enabled to calmly consider all the circumstances of his situation. He was not of an unreasonable nature and did not bitterly denounce the action of the banker and rail against the injustice and meanness of his treatment, as most would have done under like provocation. He reflected that he was really as guilty of the charge of going on a drinking spree as if he had done so. From this reflection he realized that his tendencies in the tippling habit were stronger than he had imagined. He had never frequented saloons nor taken a drink when going into company. He had simply looked upon intoxicants as among the good things of life, to be enjoyed when not engaged in business duties. Now only three days had intervened since he made the brave resolutions just before he was thrown from the buggy, yet during that brief time he had constantly felt a strong craving for his accustomed daily glass or two of stimulants.

"Harry Thorne is right," he communed with himself, "it will not do to tamper with the accursed stuff. I feel a great longing for a drink now, and yet I laughed at John Gage when he intimated that the habit was getting too strong a hold on me. I told him I could drink or let it alone, as I might choose. Well, perhaps I can, but it will require more self-denial than I supposed.

‘Would ye be pure, and free and great,
Crowned with honor’s high estate?
Then shun the cup, and turn from the brink.
Where others fall through the curse of drink.’

“Ah! how the sweet, pleading tones of my guardian angel ring in my ears. Whether she shall ever be anything more to me, this at least she shall be—my inspiration to be ‘pure and free’ from the tempter’s snare. I deserve to suffer for my folly, but it is discouraging to have to experience the humiliation of dismissal after reformation had taken place. Well, I will not try to enlighten the bank officials as to the effect produced by ‘brown eyes’ and ‘love at first sight,’ but I will let my true friend, Harry Thorne, know the sequel of his interest in my welfare. I will visit him very soon, and, perhaps, I may obtain employment in Corinth, which, for one reason at least, would suit me better than any other place.

Arising from his seat he gathered up the wine glasses from the table and the decanter and some bottles from the closet and placed them in a basket. He had just completed rearranging the articles in his room when John Gage, with a troubled expression on his face, appeared.

“My dear Harvey,” he exclaimed, “I have come to express my sympathy. Having business at the bank for my employers, and seeing Mr. Clark at your post, I asked about you and was told that you had been discharged. How in the world has this happened?”

“The dismissal was the result of being absent from my place, on account of a drinking spree.”

"You on a spree! when?"

"Last Friday night. The accident was caused by my inebriated condition, I am informed."

"Why, you can easily disprove that charge. I can testify that there is not a word of truth on it. To be plain with you, my first thought, on seeing your horse dash by me that night, was in that line. Your own words spoken at the time invitation was received suggested the thought, but when I reached your side and lifted your head from the road I satisfied myself that drink had nothing to do with the accident. I will see that you are cleared of the accusation."

"No, my friend, I will make no defense. I accept the result and will seek employment elsewhere. In intention I was guilty, although innocent of actual transgression. I could only defend myself by resorting to the arguments always adduced in justification of an occasional indulgence. My eyes are open now. My only answer to the charge will be made by my future conduct."

"Give me your hand on that," exclaimed Gage. "I see sincerity and genuine resolution in your countenance, and I have no fear of your failing to keep a good resolution when once it is made. Your room already presents the aspects of reformation. What are you going to do with those things in the basket?"

"I will send them to the infirmary, for the use of the sick. They may do good there; but here they have only done harm."

"Were you informed who reported against you at the bank?"

"No, but I have no doubt of my indebtedness to Herman Clark for my discomfiture."

"That was the thought in my own mind. He should not be allowed to reap a reward from his treachery to a friend. I will make known to the bank officials the true state of the case."

"I prefer that you say nothing. I deserve the humiliation of my situation. The lesson will be a profitable one and in the end fully compensate for all I undergo now."

"I feel sure," said Gage, after a moment's thought, "that the loss of your position is not the cause of your new resolutions. Other influences must have been at work."

"Yes, you are right, and I will tell you all about it. It is my turn now to make you a confidant."

St. Clair related in detail all the thoughts and feelings aroused as he listened to the recitations during the entertainment at Corinth, and described the mood he was in as he rode homeward, and the final act of rising to his feet in the buggy and dashing the bottle to the ground, thus causing the runaway. Gage was deeply interested in the recital, and greatly surprised to learn of the influence exerted by the fair unknown reader, and also to learn that the accident resulted from a praiseworthy act. Being himself in love he was full of sympathy with St. Clair's enthusiasm about the one who had awakened such emotions.

"St. Clair talked long and eloquently of the sensations aroused during his visit to Corinth, and his friend fully understood and appreciated the nature of

the experiences through which he had passed. But at length, realizing that his sympathetic friend deserved some consideration and possibly commiseration, St. Clair changed from the topic of his own love by asking:

“Do you still consider your love hopeless after what happened last night at the cabin on the cliff?”

“I confess,” replied Gage, “that I am now emboldened to make advances, which otherwise I would have considered presumptuous. At the first opportune occasion I will make a plain, honest avowal to Miss Barnard. She had no knowledge of my presence, and her manner was sincere and natural. Even if she accepts me, it will be a long time before I tell her of my having been an involuntary witness of the occurrences of last night. I am satisfied now that she cares more for me than I considered possible.”

“Yes, my friend, a very strange order of circumstances has revealed a secret which otherwise would have been sacredly guarded. Your course is clear. Act as your heart dictates, without disclosing that you have any insight into the sentiments of the object of your adoration.”

“I will do so, and I hope at an early date to be ready for your congratulations.”

CHAPTER VII.

MOTHER AND DAUGHTER.

“ There is in life no blessing like affection ;
It soothes, it hallows, elevates, subdues,
And bringeth down to earth its native heaven :—
Life has naught else that may supply its place.”
—*Landon.*

AT the home of Lawyer Triston, in Corinth, on the day following the incidents occurring at the fortune-teller's cabin, Katie Gardiner and her mother were seated in a cosy room, engaged in a confidential chat. It was their habit to tell to each other all that in any way interested the one or the other. Mrs. Brannan was a lady of high moral and intellectual attainments, and her daughter was of the same mold of moral and mental acquirement. They interchanged views and discussed subjects more like two sympathetic friends than like mother and daughter. The fullest confidence existed between them. Both had a deep religious nature. Their faith in God was unclouded; their trust in mankind was unsuspecting. They were united not only by the sacred bonds of the purest earthly relationship, but by the still more sacred ties of oneness in Christ's love. Mrs. Brannan had instilled into her daughter's mind, from infancy, the sublime

truths of God's word; and now, in her budding womanhood, Katie exhibited the fruits of such wholesome instruction. The world may carp and cavil, deride and despise the tenets of Christianity, but, after all, the purest and best, the truest and happiest, are those who retain through all the vicissitudes of life a simple, unfaltering trust in the old, old story of the Cross.

"Now, mother," said Katie, as she plied her nimble fingers on some fancy work and gazed fondly upon the sweet face of the loved one, who sat opposite, quietly knitting, "I wish to tell you about my visit to the cabin on the cliff. You know I never believed in fortune-telling, and I do not now. Still, it will interest you to hear the wonderful revelation made concerning my matrimonial prospects. Unlike what I expected, the seer did not deal in generalities, and prophecy what might readily apply to anyone. I thought he would say a great many meaningless things about good fortune, and lovers to appear, away in the future; but, instead, he said the crisis of my life was just at hand—that the one with whose fortunes my destiny was to be linked was near by. He even gave a description of my hero, and the initials of his name. How can he expect to keep up his pretensions, when he makes statements so improbable and so easily disproved?"

"He should foretell the future, but say nothing of the past, for the reason that somebody is sure to know the past. They know as little about the future as the fortune-teller does. It is certainly remarkable that he undertakes to indicate particularly what is to happen

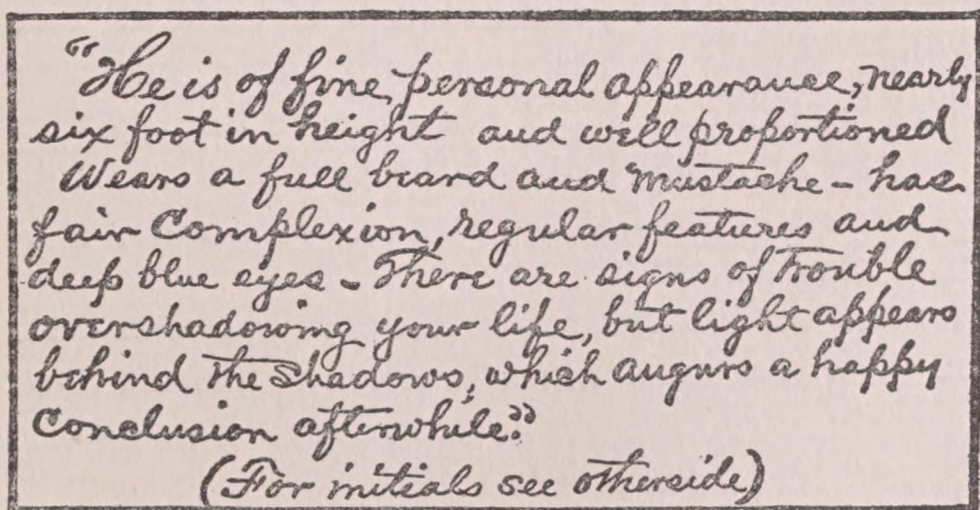
immediately, for if it does not he is at once proven an imposter."

"Well, you know it cannot happen in my case. As I have never yet regarded anyone in the light of a suitor, it is absurd for him to describe and almost name a lover."

"Of course it is, my child. Such frolics answer for a little diversion, but should not receive any serious consideration.

"I am not at all serious over it. I do not even recollect the description given or the initials. Oh! I remember now that one of the gentlemen present wrote out my fortune on a card and gave it to me. Let me get it and read to you a description of your future son-in-law."


She soon returned from her room with a card in her hand, and read as follows:



"He is of fine personal appearance, nearly six foot in height and well proportioned. Wears a full beard and mustache - has fair complexion, regular features and deep blue eyes - There are signs of trouble overshadowing your life, but light appears behind the shadows, which augurs a happy conclusion afterwards."
(For initials see other side)

On reading the words in brackets, she turned the card over and burst into a ringing laugh. She had not before examined the card.

"Look at this mother," she cried. "Here is quite a witty pleasantry on the part of the young gentleman. I remember the letters traced on the chart by the rod in my hand were H. S. C. See the reverse side of the card, handing it to her mother:



Herman S. Clark

"This is turning out quite an adventure. Harry Thorne introduced the young man as Mr. Clark. That his initials should correspond with those made on the chart is curious. I did not observe him particularly, but he certainly had a full beard and mustache and was of good general appearance—I wonder if he had deep blue eyes?"

"There is no doubt of it," replied Mrs. Brannan, smiling. "Everything indicates that the fortune-teller and Mr. Clark are known to each other, and all was done purposely as a jest."

"That is a very natural inference. Still, I am positive, from the conversation of Harry Thorne and the others that the fortune-teller was entirely unknown to all present. Mr. Clark could have had no understand-

ing in reference to me, as my coming could not have been known. How it all came about I cannot imagine now, but the explanation will doubtless appear later. In the meantime, it can all pass as a pleasant joke, for such I am sure it was intended by Mr. Clark."

Katie recounted to her mother the fortunes told of the other members of the party. She had been very favorably impressed with Miss Barnard and Miss Gage and looked forward with pleasure to a promised visit from them at an early day. As all she had met at the cabin were intimately known to her friend, Harry Thorne, the acquaintance so strangely made was regarded with favor. In due course of time an intimate friendship grew up between all who were so unexpectedly brought together that night at the house on the cliff."

"Mother," said Katie, after she had finished the story of the previous night's experience, "I had a very vivid dream last night. I do not usually remember dreams, but this one somehow impresses me, as the incidents are so distinctly retained in my mind. Shall I tell it to you?"

"Oh, yes, my dear. I am like everybody else, ready to listen to a dream, and yet I have never known one to be realized. I have no superstitions about them. Owing to the peculiar occurrences at the fortune-teller's, your mind was excited, and for that reason your dream was vivid; but tell it to me, dear."

"In my dream, I heard a voice calling my name. I did not recognize the voice, yet the tones seemed familiar. It was like my father's, yet I was sure it

was not his. The call was repeated, clearly and distinctly, 'Katie, come to me.' Tenderly and pleadingly the words were spoken. I answered, 'Yes, I will come.' I arose and started in the direction of the voice, when suddenly I found myself in the streets of a large and strange city. Some invisible influence led my steps along the street until I came in front of a two-story red brick house; the gate opened and in some twenty steps I reached the front door, which opened on my turning the knob. The street, the yard and the house are now so distinct in my mind that if there is such a place and I should come upon it when awake I should recognize it instantly. What I was doing did not seem strange to me, yet everything I saw was unfamiliar. Entering the hall, I ascended the stairway to the second floor and pushed open a door leading into a large front room. On the opposite side of the room I saw someone lying on a bed. The light from the lamp on the mantel fell full upon the face. It was not altogether strange to me, yet I could not recall when or where I had seen it. As I looked upon the quiet, white face before me, my imagination carried me back to childhood days, but my mind was confused and wandering—I could not discern definite shape and expression of some face I had known long ago. In advancing a step towards the bed, I was startled to see the eyes open and gaze intently upon me. I had no sense of fear—all seemed natural, and that I was there for some important purpose, but I could not make out what it was. In a moment the form arose, and with arms outstretched towards me

uttered, in the same voice I had first heard calling my name, these words: 'Thank God, you have come in time. I have repented my bitter, foolish vow, and all will be well with you now. Let me kiss and bless you ere I die. I sprang to the bedside to receive his caress and blessing, and just as I felt the touch of his arms around me, I awoke.'

"Your dream impresses me more than I expected. Can you describe the one who spoke those words to you?"

"He had a full, round face, light blue eyes, reddish-colored hair and beard, streaked with gray, and appeared to be fifty-four or five years of age."

"Your dream is indeed startling. The description you give answers to that of your Uncle Jared, your father's only brother. Still, it is only a dream. The strange wanderings of the mind during bodily sleep cannot always be accounted for. In your case it probably arises from impressions made on your mind when very young. Your uncle, Jared Gardiner, spent nearly six months at our home when you were about four years of age. He was greatly attached to you, and you were very fond of him. Although you do not remember what happened when you were so young, still, in a dream, it might be possible to reproduce features that were so familiar to your infant mind. And, besides, you have doubtless, in years past, heard your father and myself speak of the personal appearance of your uncle. In this way I account for the personnel of your dream creation, and as to the other

incidents and words, they are the unaccountable vagaries of a dream, and therefore meaningless."

"Fourteen years ago my uncle's hair and beard would not have been streaked with gray, nor would he have appeared past fifty years of age. If your solution of the dream creation is correct, I must in my vision have added the effects of the years intervening since the impression of his appearance was imprinted on my infantile mind."

"I see," replied Mrs. Brannan, smiling, "that I have overlooked a detail which seriously interferes with my theory. We had better just simply call it a dream, and not try to account for it."

"But do you think it can have no significance? Might it not be a warning of uncle's illness and of his desire for reconciliation?"

"I do not believe that such revelations are made through the medium of dreams. Knowing your uncle as I do, I cannot entertain the idea that he would, even at death's door, change a resolution once formed. Although a good man in many respects, he was self-willed and stubborn to the last degree—almost the very opposite of your father, who was kind, obliging and generous to a fault. As I have told you before, your uncle took a great fancy to you in your childhood, and proposed to adopt you as his heir, if allowed to take you to his home as soon as you reached proper school age. He was a bachelor, but as he had a good housekeeper and plenty of servants, kept house in very elegant style in Philadelphia. Your father replied to the proposal, 'that he would not part

with his jewel for all the other jewels in the world.' 'Very well,' retorted your uncle, in great indignation, 'you can keep your jewel, and I'll keep mine. Not a farthing of my wealth shall ever go to you or yours.' He departed at once, and although your father wrote kind, brotherly letters to him many times, no answer was ever made. When your father died, I notified him of the sad event, and received a few cold lines saying he hoped I was comfortably provided for, as he had adopted a cousin as his heir and had made his will, leaving all to the child of his adoption; that I need never expect any inheritance from him. I wrote in reply that I did not seek any interest in his wealth, but only to be on good terms with the brother of my husband, whom I had loved so fondly and now mourned so deeply. He did not answer, and it is some twelve years since any word has been received concerning him. Whether living or dying, I am sure Jared Gardiner would never seek reconciliation."

"Well, if he should call to me when I am awake, I will go to him as I did in my dream, not because of his riches, but because of his being the brother of my sainted father."

CHAPTER VIII.

DEUX CARTES DE VISITE.

“Were his eyes open? Yes, and his mouth too;—
Surprise has this effect, to make one dumb,
Yet leaves the gate, which eloquence slips through,
As wide as if a long speech were to come.”

—*Byron.*

HARVEY ST. CLAIR, about a week after his discharge from the bank, paid a visit to Harry Thorne. He frankly told his friend the results of his attendance at the temperance entertainment, so far as they related to his change of views and resolutions formed.

He did not divulge the love emotions aroused by Miss Gardiner, but said that her fine rendition caused him to think, and thereby to resolve a change in his habits. He should be glad to make her acquaintance, but did not wish her to have the thought that he was indebted to her for impressions changing his ideas of life. He felt that if she knew that he regarded her as one who had done him a great service, it would put her in an attitude of interested sympathy for him.

Thorne understood the feelings of his friend fully and respected them. He was greatly surprised and indignant on hearing of St. Clair's discharge from the bank. St. Clair did not intimate his suspicions as to who he thought had poisoned the mind of the banker

against him. Thorne was fully satisfied of his friend's sincerity in the resolutions made, and his most profound interest in his prospects was aroused.

He at once sought the influence of Judge Triston and others of his friends in behalf of St. Clair. Through their united endeavors, a position was obtained for him in the bank at Corinth. This result was so gratifying to St. Clair that he almost felt himself under obligations to Herman Clark for what he was certain he had been instrumental in accomplishing.

One evening, shortly after St. Clair had been established in his new situation, Harry Thorne accompanied him in a call at the residence of Judge Triston, for the purpose of introducing him to Miss Gardiner. During the evening, while St. Clair and Miss Gardiner were conversing on general literary topics, Thorne happened to pick up a card lying on the center table. He was surprised to find on one side of it the name of Herman S. Clark, and on the other the words of the fortune-teller concerning Miss Gardiner's lover. After a moment's reflection, he took up the visiting card of St. Clair, which had been handed in when they called that evening. Arising, he asked to be excused while he stepped into the library room to examine a certain book. When alone, he took the card of St. Clair and wrote on the back of it the exact words as they appeared on the back of Clark's card. After a short absence he returned to the parlor, and, unobserved, placed St. Clair's card where he had found Clark's, and put Mr. Clark's card in his pocket. He had no special design in this action, but his quick

perception discovered that the general description was identical, and the capital letters in their names were the same, and concluded that the exchange of cards might result in an amusing mystification. He did not dream how far-reaching might be the consequences of so trivial a jest. Presently Judge Triston and Mrs. Brannan came into the parlor, and a very pleasant evening was spent. St. Clair was a very entertaining colloquist, and the acquaintance formed was pleasing on all sides. St. Clair became a frequent and welcome visitor.

A few days later a buggy stopped at the door of Judge Triston's residence, and Mr. Herman Clark alighted. He sent in his card, inquiring for Miss Gardiner. He had been seated in the parlor only a few minutes when that young lady appeared.

"I hope, Miss Gardiner," he said, with a polite bow and gracious smile, "that I am not presuming in making a call on one whose acquaintance I made by accident. Business matters brought me to Corinth to-day, and I felt I ought, perhaps, to apologize for a seemingly unpardonable boldness. I refer to the act of giving you my card, with the words in brackets on it. On the impulse of the moment I did it, but only in the spirit of jest. Of course, I did not assume myself (an entire stranger to you) to be the one so honored of the gods. The coincidence of the initials struck me, and I felt I might rely on your ready appreciation of a pleasantry to acquit me of rudeness."

"I understood it precisely as you say you intended it. I was greatly amused on looking at the card and

observing the coincidence of description and initials, for I was certain that you, as well as myself, had no part in contriving the concurrence."

"You do me full justice. I was apprehensive that the singular coincidence and my calling attention to the initials might have caused you to think a trick was imposed. I am indeed gratified that you did not misunderstand, and now I trust that I may not be debarred from your friendship because the idle words of the fortune-teller seemed to point to me as one connected with your destiny. I wish to rest my claims on your friendship to my own personality, and not to the predictions of a soothsayer."

In making this disclaimer of any faith in the occult science, he felt that any tendencies to superstition she might have would assert itself more surely thereby. He believed that everyone had more or less superstition, and that, although she would deny having any, it would operate in his favor if he seemed free from such influences altogether; and he was right in this conjecture.

"I assure you that what occurred arouses no prejudices against you. But can you account for the singular utterances of the fortune-teller?"

"I cannot. It is the most unaccountable thing I ever heard of. Neither of us ever saw him previously, and I am certain he had never seen or heard of either of us. On my way here to-day I stopped at his cabin and asked him how he came to describe me in telling your fortune; he replied that he did not describe any-

one he had ever seen, but simply read the language of the signs of your horoscope.”

The latter part of this statement was untrue. The fortune-teller had told him that he had in mind a Mr. St. Clair, whom he had seen several times recently, but did not disclose the fact of St. Clair's presence that night.

When Clark ceased speaking, he carelessly took up a card from the table, and laughingly read aloud the writing on it:

“He is of fine personal appearance, nearly six foot in height, and well proportioned. Wears a full beard and mustache—has fair complexion, regular features and deep blue eyes. There are signs of trouble overshadowing your life, but light appears behind the shadows, which augurs a happy conclusion after while.” (For initials see other side.)

Mr. Clark was in a very gay humor, and joined with Miss Gardiner in a hearty laugh as he finished the reading and looked up into her face. Glancing again at the card, he mechanically reversed it. A startled look overspread his countenance; then an angry frown gathered, and he grit his teeth in suppressed rage. He had seen the name of Harvey St. Clair on the card instead of his own. He quickly threw the card on the table, and muttered to himself, “I will get even for this trick, Mr. St. Clair. I caused you to lose your position in the bank, and I will see that ill-luck follows you.” In a moment, however, he regained his composure, and a lively conversation was carried on for some time. At length, when

he arose to take his leave, he was invited to call again. Thus begun an acquaintance which was destined to long continue.

During the six months following their association ripened into a warm, friendly intimacy. Miss Gardiner had spent a week with Miss Barnard, in return for a visit made to her. While there, Clark had been a frequent caller. Almost every evening there was a gathering of Miss Barnard's friends, either at her uncle's house or at the home of some of her neighbors. On all occasions Clark and Gage were present, together with other gentlemen and ladies of their circle. In the afternoons delightful drives were taken.

John Gage realized that the impression made on his mind at the fortune-teller's house was correct. He was relieved of a rival. Mr. Clark paid his attentions almost exclusively to Miss Gardiner, and she seemed very well pleased. Gage was too happy in having the constant privilege of attending upon Miss Barnard to give much thought to the conduct of others. At times he remembered the revelation Harvey St. Clair had made of his feelings towards Miss Gardiner, and he experienced some uneasiness about his friend's prospects as he observed the growing intimacy between Herman Clark and that young lady.

In regard to his own affairs, Gage acted very discreetly for several weeks after the occurrences at the cabin on the cliff. He did not change his manner towards Miss Barnard in the least, and carefully avoided making any advances until time should have banished from her mind the fortune-teller's words. However,

during the visit of Miss Gardiner, when he was thrown more exclusively with Miss Barnard, he began to carry out the purpose he had declared to St. Clair. He was not long in discovering that all his old apprehensions were groundless. While his poverty had been an obstacle to him, he soon found out that it was not one to her. Being satisfied that his love was reciprocated, he avoided a definite avowal until he had conferred with her uncle in reference to the matter of her father's consent.

Mr. Joseph Barnard was not greatly surprised at the statement of the young man. He had known John Gage from his infancy, and had been deeply gratified to see him develop into a pure, noble and spotless manhood. He felt that if he had a daughter of his own he should be glad to welcome such a son-in-law; and he at once relieved Gage of much anxiety by offering to write and lay the whole matter before his brother. He assured John that Lena's father would only consult her happiness, and as it was evident in what direction that tended, the happy issue of his overtures might be easily conjectured.

Accordingly, after ascertaining from his niece the true state of her heart, Mr. Joseph Barnard addressed a lengthy letter to his brother, in which everything important for the father to know was stated. At the close of his letter he used the following words:

"You, dear brother, have other daughters, while I have no children. My wife and I are growing old. I wish to be relieved from my large stock and farming interest. I know you will naturally desire to have

your daughter, after marriage, live near you; but with your other children at home you can afford not only to spare Lena to a worthy young man, but also to me. If, with your consent, she can marry Mr. Gage, I wish them to live with me—to share my home. With the opportunities I can give him in the line of a partnership in the increase of stock and the profits of the farm, he will soon be a rich man, while I shall be none the poorer.”

In due time an answer came to this letter, and also a lengthy one to Lena. Suffice it to say, the desired consent and blessing were not withheld. It was arranged that Lena should soon terminate her visit and return home to make preparations for the wedding; that Mr. Gage, at the appointed time, should follow, and that after the honeymoon they should make their future home at Meadow Farm.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FORTUNE-TELLER'S STORY.

“ Mine after-life ! What is mine after-life ?
My day is closed ! The gloom of night is come ;
A hopeless darkness settles o'er my fate ! ”

—*Baillie.*

“ So farewell, hope, and with hope farewell fear ;
Farewell remorse ; all good to me is lost ;
Evil, be thou my good ! ”

—*Milton.*

CLARK was greatly enraged over the substitution of St. Clair's card for his own with the fortune-teller's words written thereon. He sought the fortune-teller, determined to make him his friend, with the view of using him. By various means he poisoned his mind against St. Clair. He asserted that St. Clair was not only dissipated but very weak, and guilty of a grave crime, as would shortly appear. By degrees he won the fortune-teller's confidence. He saw at once that behind the pretence of fortune-telling there was an important secret, and all his subtle ingenuity was exerted to ascertain what it was. His great plausibility and warm proffers of friendship at length overcame the reticence of the recluse, who agreed to unfold the story of his life if Mr. Clark would spend the following Sunday at the cabin. Accordingly, Mr. Clark ap-

peared at the time indicated, and the fortune-teller promptly began the revelation promised. With his wig and false beard removed and dressed in ordinary suit, he presented a creditable appearance, having no resemblance to the grotesque figure of the fortune-teller.

“My name is Stephen Pye. Of the early years of my life I will not speak, as they were passed without incident of especial interest. Soon after the beginning of the War of the Rebellion, I enlisted in the Union Army. While my regiment was stationed at Cleveland, Tennessee, in the fall of 1863, I was seized with a terrible attack of home-sickness. I had left a young wife at the home of my father and mother, who were quite old, and the thought came to me that I might never see wife and aged parents again; a great longing for home took possession of me. It grew in intensity. I could not overcome the home-sick feeling. At that time a general order of the War Department was in force, prescribing that no furlough would be granted, except on surgeon's certificate that it was necessary in order to save life or to prevent permanent disability. A singular experience through which I passed at this time I will relate, as it had an important bearing on the later incidents of my life. One day, while brooding over the hopelessness of securing a furlough, and feeling unusually despondent, my eye rested on an advertisement in a newspaper. It stated that medical boards for the examination of applicants for position of hospital steward in colored regiments were in session at New York, Boston, Phil-

adelphia and Cincinnati. One of these cities was near my home and also the most convenient point to the place where I was then stationed. A wild impulse seized me. I knew nothing whatever about medicine and under no circumstances would have taken a position in a negro regiment, but I at once decided to apply.

I was sure I could not pass the examination, and determined not to, if I could. My only object was to be ordered to the point near my home, which I purposed to reach, in some way or other, before I returned to my regiment, after failing to pass the examination. My application was promptly forwarded through the proper military channels, and in due time it came back with an endorsement thereon, stating that a new board had been appointed to convene at Knoxville, Tennessee, and that the applicant was ordered to appear there. You can imagine my discomfiture. This was taking me further from home, instead of nearer to it. There was no alternative, however. The transportation and orders to go were sent to me by the commanding officer. On reaching Knoxville, I reported to the medical director, and was assigned quarters with the surgeon of a Tennessee colored regiment stationed there. The following day I appeared at the room of the examining board. As soon as I found opportunity, I stated to the members of the board that I had changed my mind and did not desire to undergo the examination.

“ ‘Why did you come here, then?’ asked the president of the board.

"Because I was ordered, and, having obeyed the order, I now request that you order me back to the regiment.

" 'What caused you to change your mind?'

"I was convinced by what I saw at my quarters last night, with the surgeon of a colored regiment, that the position would not be an agreeable one." I said this as the best excuse I could think of, being anxious it should not be discovered that my application had not been made in good faith. I feared arrest and punishment in case my real motive was disclosed.

" 'Well,' replied the chairman of the board, 'I do not blame you for objecting to a position in the colored regiment; but this board also examines for position of hospital steward in the regular army, and that is a better berth than assistant surgeon of volunteers. You can change your application, and we will proceed with the examination.'

"Here was a dilemma I had not counted on. Having never looked into a medical work, and scarcely knowing one drug from another, how could I stand an examination on the duties of a hospital steward?

" 'No,' I said, 'I do not want the place. Please give me an order to return to my regiment.'

" 'Our first order will be for you to reply to a few questions. What medical works have you read?'

"I felt I was caught, but in desperation answered promptly:

" 'I never read any, sir.'

"He seemed astonished, but smilingly said:

" 'What books have you read, then?'

“‘Law books,’ I replied.

“‘What is law?’ he asked.

“I gave him Blackstone’s definition. He then asked me quite a number of law questions. Evidently he had studied law as well as medicine. Next, he interrogated me on geography, history, mathematics and the languages. My answers appeared satisfactory, and he seemed to be in a pleasant humor. At length he said:

“‘You say you have no knowledge of medicine. Can you tell what would be an overdose of quinine?’

“Although thoroughly frightened now, I responded promptly:

“‘I saw in a newspaper the other day an account of an Irishman’s taking an ounce inside of twenty-four hours without it killing him, but I do not know how much it would take to kill one of those big buck negroes I saw last evening in the Tennessee colored regiment.’

“All the members of the board laughed heartily. They were regular army officers and evidently not in sympathy with the negro troops.

“‘Never mind that,’ said the president of the board, still laughing. ‘You are not being examined for that service, but for the regular army. What would be an overdose of laudanum?’

“‘I do not know, sir.’ I was so confused and alarmed now that I did not know laudanum from paregoric.

“‘What! do not know that? Suppose you were in a general hospital and a soldier had an attack of cholera-

morbus, and no physician was present, how much would you risk as a venture?’

“‘Not a drop, sir.’

“‘What! would you let the man die?’

“‘Yes, before I would kill him. I do not know anything about medicines, and I would not administer any until I found out from somebody who did know.’

“‘Well, we are certain of one thing; there is no danger of your killing anyone, and that is more than can be said of some hospital stewards.’

“Instead of being indignant and shocked, as I expected, at the idea of an application for such a position from a man utterly ignorant of the first principles of materia medica, they appeared greatly amused.

“‘Let us see what you know about making out reports. Here are blanks used in a general hospital.’

“Having had large clerical experience, I could readily put in proper shape the supposed cases that were stated. I showed to better advantage than in the line of the dispensary. Finally the chairman of the board announced that the examination was finished, and that I could retire. When I had reached the door, a sudden impulse caused me to turn back and ask permission to say a word, which was granted.

“‘Gentlemen,’ I said, ‘I do not know what your report in my case will be—whether favorable or not. It is probably none of my business; but I should like to ask that you report unfavorably, as I now desire to continue with my regiment.’

“‘It has been a uniform rule of this board,’ replied the chairman, ‘not to tell an applicant whether he has

or has not passed. Our report is made to the Surgeon-General, and the result is announced by that officer. Heretofore this rule has not been broken, but this time we will violate it and tell you that our report will be favorable. You will not, of course, be assigned to duty in the dispensary department, but you have qualifications for usefulness in other lines of the general hospital service. Good day, sir.' ”

Mr. Clark was becoming impatient over the garrulous egotism of Stephen Pye in giving the minute details of his examination, but refrained from interrupting him.

“On passing out of the room,” continued Mr. Pye, “I was followed by an officer who had been present during the entire proceedings. As I soon learned, he had no connection with the board, but was there on some matter of business, and remained to hear the examination. He accosted me as I reached the street.

“ ‘Pardon me, sir,’ he said, ‘I wish to make the acquaintance of one who has passed through such an ordeal as you have. I am Captain Brannan, of —— Regiment. If you will accompany me, I promise you more desirable accommodations than those you spoke of having with the surgeon of the colored regiment.’

“ ‘Thank you, Captain, I will gladly accept your invitation.’

“I accompanied the officer to his quarters. We soon became quite well acquainted, and when I confided to him my motive in applying for examination before the board, he said he would try to be of service in getting me ordered north, so that I could visit home. He

informed me that he was tired of military life—it was not suited to his tastes—and that as he had tendered his resignation, he expected soon to be at liberty to return to civil life. He was a lawyer, and did not wish to lose any more time in selecting a permanent location in which to build up a practice. The small town where he had studied law and where he had enlisted was unsuited to his aspirations. He inquired about my native town, and seemed greatly interested in my account of it, saying he would certainly visit it before deciding upon a location.

“My new acquaintance provided me with good accommodations that night, and the following morning I returned to my regiment. In a short time I received my appointment as hospital steward in the regular army, with orders to report at Nashville, Tennessee, to be mustered in. At the same time I received a letter from Captain Brannan, stating that he had received a recommendation from the board of examiners that I be ordered to Louisville, Ky., for duty in the general hospitals at that point; that his resignation had been accepted and that in two days he would be on his way north and hoped I would be ready to board the same train. I spent a day in saying good-bye to my friends in the regiment; the next, stepped on the train, and, as I expected, found Captain Brannan among the passengers. We stopped at Nashville only long enough for me to be mustered into the new service and then continued northward. In talking the matter over Captain Brannan concluded to go at once to Greenwich, my home town, to investigate the prospects of locating there.

I passed through Louisville, without reporting to the Assistant Surgeon, General Woods, as I had been ordered, and soon arrived at my home. I will not attempt to describe my happy meeting with wife and parents. Only those who have reached home after experiencing real homesickness can know the happiness I felt. Captain Brannan spent three days in Greenwich, carefully examining all the points suitable and unsuitable to his project. He insisted on stopping at a hotel, but spent the evenings at my home. His manners were engaging, and he was soon on the most friendly terms with my people. I introduced him as one who had been both courteous and serviceable to me. I entertained very warm and cordial feelings toward him. From the first he had favorably impressed me. I had no misgivings or presentiment of any evil to come through this man. At the end of three days he departed for his home in the East. I remained four days longer—seven happy days at home, and then returned to Louisville, where I was assigned to duty at Brown's general hospital. I heard from home frequently and was informed that Captain Brannan had established himself at Greenwich and was rapidly building up a good practice. My wife's letters often mentioned his calling at my home, and always kindly inquiring about me. A year passed. I felt at times, in a vague way, that Madeline's letters were less loving than formerly, but no definite suspicion entered my mind. For several months no mention had been made of Captain Brannan, and he had almost passed out of my recollection. I had been transferred to

Memphis, Tenn., and had not been able to secure a furlough; but as the war had now terminated, I was seeking my discharge and expected soon to return home. While I was anxiously waiting for my discharge papers, a letter came from my father, containing a revelation which forever blighted my life. It stated that very scandalous rumors had suddenly started about my wife and Captain Brannan, and immediately both had disappeared; no one knew where they had gone. I was wild, distracted, almost demented. That very day my discharge papers reached me, and I started for home, or for what had been my home. On reaching there I investigated diligently to ascertain if there was any clew to the direction taken by the runaways. I could learn nothing beyond the fact that Madeline and Captain Brannan had disappeared at the same time, but no one had seen either leave the town. Evidently they had met at night, and by some means reached a neighboring station. Whether they had gone east or west I could not discover. From those intimately acquainted with Captain Brannan I gained some insight into his inclinations and prevailing tendencies of disposition and character. Guided by no other light, I determined to devote my life to the work of discovering and punishing the destroyer of my home. I traveled through many States, passing from town to town and from city to city, searching in the places where I thought he was most likely to be found, judging from temperament, as described to me. My father aided me with means of travel as long as he could afford it, but at

length advised me that I must give up the fruitless search, as he could spare no more funds with which to prosecute it further. I was then in the city of C——, and in my wanderings through the various streets I had made the acquaintance of a very singular character who had apartments where he told the fortunes of those who sought his offices. His sign bore the name of 'Wm. Askew, Prince of Prophets.' I did not believe that any one had occult powers, and did not seek his services as fortune-teller, but considering that he might gain points of information from the many who visited him, I told him my story. He at once became interested in me, and asked for minute descriptions of the guilty pair. He frankly told me about himself—how he in different capacities had spent several years in the city, frequently changing his locality for the purpose of learning as much as possible about families before disguising himself as a fortune-teller. He had made careful memoranda of bits of family history of a great many people in various sections of the city. After opening his fortune-telling establishment he had sent his advertisements specially to those with whose secret history he had become acquainted. Many who came to him he knew well, but, being disguised, he was unknown to them. His revelations in many instances were so remarkable as to give him great fame, and his occupation became very remunerative. He encouraged me with the statement that if the ones I sought were or had been recently in that city he would certainly discover it. I visited him many times, but nothing had transpired in the direction of my longing.

On calling one morning, after several days' absence, I found Mr. Askew very sick. I offered to remain with him and render such service as I could. He was very thankful, and as he had comfortable bachelor quarters in rear of the room he used for the reception of patrons, he asked me to live with him for a time. For the sake of company he was very willing, he said, to provide me board and lodging. His physical condition was causing him considerable anxiety, and not without reason, as I soon discovered. Several weeks passed, during which time his condition grew gradually worse. On some days he was better and was able to ply his profession; on others he was too weak, and persuaded me to assume his disguise and take his place. He instructed me so thoroughly as to his manner of procedure that I soon became an adept in deceiving and mystifying his patrons, if not in enlightening them. In cases where I was at a loss I found excuse to retire to next room, and after consultation would be able to make some sort of satisfactory revelation. Billy Askew was indeed a remarkable man; his resources were almost boundless in the line of his art. Notwithstanding his sickness, he still kept my matter in view. He had two agents, who, in the guise of peddlers, visited all sections and as opportunity offered, would drop a word about the wonderful powers of the fortune-teller. He supplied these peddlers with articles to sell at such rates as enabled them to make a living. They were not only bound to Mr. Askew on account of financial considerations, but also attached to him because of his strange influence over

them. To these men he was not an imposter. All his tricks and subterfuges were kept to himself, and through his fertile resources he mystified his accomplices almost as much as he did the patrons they brought to him. He was careful in selecting those whose superstitious nature could readily be intensified and brought to accept and believe whatever he pleased. His control over his agents was such that they did implicitly as directed—did it willingly and cheerfully and were of great use to him. For some time he had been sending these peddlers out each day in different directions. They brought in good returns from sales, but no news that concerned me. One day I observed that the fortune-teller was deeply interested in the story one of them was relating. Late in the evening of the day following Mr. Askew said to me that he had been informed by one of the peddlers that a lady would that night call to have her fortune told. He was not certain of being able to reveal her secret history, but wishing me to witness his effort asked me to take a position where, without being seen I could hear and see all that passed.

CHAPTER X.

THE MISSING WIFE FOUND.

“What next? I know not, do not care—
Come pain or pleasure, weal or woe,—
There’s nothing which I cannot bear,
Since I have borne this withering blow.”

— *Watson.*

“SOON after dark a closely-veiled woman entered,” continued Stephen Pye, while Mr. Clark reclined on an easy chair, smoking a fragrant Havana, patiently listening to the strange recital. “Mr. Askew, arrayed as you have seen me when telling fortunes, was sitting in his usual seat. An easel stood at the right of his chair, over which was thrown a drapery, completely hiding whatever object rested on the easel. He pointed the visitor to a seat in front of him, which she took, still keeping her face veiled.

“‘For what purpose, madam, do you seek me?’

“‘I have been importuned to visit you by one who says you have mysterious powers in revealing what is hidden. Can you tell one concerning an absent friend or lover?’

“The fortune teller asked the date of her birth, and then took up an almanac (the table and room were lined with almanacs); after consulting it, he turned to a chart on a table to his left (the same that you have

seen me use). After closely scrutinizing it awhile, he said:

“‘I see clearly your past life. I will try to recount the story of your past, and if I read it aright I may be able to decipher the future and reveal what you desire to know. You will know if I tell correctly what has already been.’

“From my secreted position I observed that the veiled figure trembled with excitement as she leaned forward to catch the slow, feeble words of the seer.

“‘You were married at an early age, and for a while lived happily. Your husband, at length, had cause to be absent from home for a considerable time. During that absence, you forgot the vows you had made and allowed love for another to take possession of your heart. You fled with the object of your guilty love to another part of the country. In your case, as in all similar ones, your dream of happiness was soon over. The one who caused you to sin has now left you, as you did the one you had vowed to cherish. Now, madam, look intently at this magic curtain over the easel, and as you gaze think of the false lover, and see if the fates will not imprint visibly his name, and thus prove that it is given to me to read your innermost secrets?’

“She turned her eyes in the direction indicated; he paused an instant, and then, reaching out his hand, snatched away the curtain. There, on a small black-board, in distinct letters, was written:

Captain Presley Brannan.

“‘Merciful heavens!’ exclaimed the woman, as she sprang to her feet and tore the veil from her face, ‘how could his name appear there?’

“‘Until I saw the name when the curtain was removed, I had no idea as to the identity of the visitor. I heard the words of the fortune-teller, but thought it was only the story of some other woman who had strayed from virtue’s path. I stepped from behind a screen and stood face to face with Madeline, my dishonored wife. Her eyes met mine with a look of amazement and dread. My emotions almost overpowered me.

“‘Heaven can have no mercy for such as you,’ I said, bitterly. ‘Yet, as I remember what you have been to me, I will refrain from reproachful words. I have sought you long and ardently, not for your sake, but that I might find the villain who, under the guise of friendship, perpetrated the foul deed which has blighted my life. Tell me where this man is.’

“‘I cannot; I do not know.’

“‘Is it true, then, as the fortune-teller has said,’ that he has left you?’

“‘It is true.’

“‘Will you tell me when and where you last saw him?’

“‘Yes, for it will do neither good nor harm. If I knew where he was I would not tell you. I only know that he is gone—how far or in what direction I have no knowledge. We had lived a short time in several places before coming to this city, about six months ago. Our lodgings were in a retired part of the city,

and we expected to remain here permanently. About a month ago he left me one morning, saying he would return at dinner-time. I have not seen him since.'

" 'Am I to understand that he deserted you without a word of explanation?'

" 'Yes,' she replied.

" 'You are trying to deceive,' said the fortune-teller, who had remained a quiet but attentive observer of all that had passed. 'He made no explanation when he left, but you have heard from him since.'

" Madeline seemed frightened by his solemn tones and searching glance.

" 'Speak, madam, and tell the truth,' he demanded, in an imperative tone.

" 'I will tell the whole truth. I received a note from him saying that he had discovered that Stephen Pye was in the city searching for us. He enclosed money to provide for my wants for some time in the future, and warned me to keep in close seclusion. He said that he would leave the city at once and would never return to live with me, as he was tired of hiding from the vengeance of my husband. His purpose was to locate in a distant State, whether in the east, west, north or south he did not say, and when established in a practice he would arrange by letter to meet me from time to time, but that I must dismiss from my mind all thought of our living together again; our separation was necessary for peace and safety.'

" 'Did he tell you when and where to look for a communication?'

" 'Yes,'

“ ‘When?’

“ ‘That I will not tell. If you cannot discover it by your powers as a fortune-teller, as you did my identity, you will not learn it otherwise.’

“ ‘Are you not satisfied with your past folly, and ready to make such reparation as you can?’

“ ‘Reparation is now impossible. My husband would not receive me back, if I desired to return, and knowing my unworthiness, I would not go if he offered to forgive and forget—for that he could not do. I have made my bed and will lie in it; whether hard or soft, it is of my own making. I have told you all that I ever will tell. I am sorry for the wrong I have done my husband, but it is now not in my power to make reparation. He despises me, as it is natural he should, and I love not him, but another. Our ways lie in different directions. I wish him no harm, but also wish to never see him again. My devotion continues for Captain Brannan and I will shield and protect him with my life, if necessary.

“ ‘I do not know by what means I have been ensnared into this trap, or how you knew my history, or how Stephen Pye appears here. I only know that it is not me you want, and that the one you seek is gone whither I know not. If I ever know, it will be my own secret, and no power on earth could tear it from me. Allow me now to depart.’ She arose and turned toward the door.

“ ‘Stay,’ I cried. ‘My only chance to find the scoundrel who so foully betrayed my friendship is through

you. I will not lose sight of you, much as I loathe your presence.'

"Your thought is unwise. As long as you watch me I will warn and prevent Captain Brannan from coming near me. Your chance of finding him is best when you lose trace of me.' "

" 'Woman,' said the fortune-teller, 'you can go.' " With a grasp of his hand, he restrained my impulse to follow her rapid exit from the room.

" 'I know where she lives. My agents will shadow her every movement. The servant at her apartments has been bribed by my peddler to report all that occurs. I was not certain from what I could first learn that this woman was your missing wife; hence I instructed my confederate to gain access to her presence in his guise as a peddler, and from time to time tell her wonderful stories of my locating absent ones. She expects to hear from him afterwhile, but is impatient to rejoin him at once. My agent worked upon her superstitions until she agreed to make me a visit; the results you have witnessed.'

" 'Soon after this Mr. Askew was seized with violent illness. My constant attention was required at his bedside. I had become greatly attached to this singular being. In my hour of destitution he had provided me with food and shelter, and zealously interested himself in the work of discovering the destroyer of my home. The physician whom I summoned did all in his power to check the disease, but in vain. He grew worse day by day. At the end of a week the doctor told me, in answer to my anxious inquiries, that re-

covery was impossible, and that he could survive, at best, only a few days longer. That night, as I took my seat to watch and minister as I best I could, the sick man told me that he knew his condition, and fully realized that his earthly hours were numbered.

“‘My friend,’ he continued, ‘I wish you to listen now to what I have to say, as I may not be able after this to hold converse. I feel that the end is very near. There will be none to mourn for me, unless it be you, who have ministered with such self-sacrificing devotion during the days and nights of this sickness. So far as I know, I have no kindred living. I was cast adrift in my childhood, and have been a wanderer all my life. I have no remembrance of parents or home. My earliest recollection is of an orphans’ home. I have told you at different times of the varied experiences of my life, and there is nothing more of interest to communicate now, except to tell you of my possessions and the disposition I have made of them. I have accumulated ten thousand dollars, which is invested in six per cent. Government bonds. This I have hoarded to provide against the wants of age. I shall have no use for it, and I have made such disposition of it as is most agreeable to my wishes. In the short period of our acquaintance I have formed a great liking for you. The other day, while you, at my urging, took a long walk in the fresh air, I sent for a lawyer and witnesses, and executed a will, giving to you everything I possess. You will find the will and the bonds in the iron chest in the corner of this room. No one can dispute your right to take possession of

all that the poor old fortune-teller leaves behind him. You have learned my profession, and with all the paraphernalia, mystic symbols, and devices at your command, you can pursue your mission, with better chances of success, than in any other way. I am glad that in these last weeks I have found one who has ministered so kindly in my great need, and that I am able to do now what will serve him well, after I am gone. In addition to the bonds in the chest, you will find sufficient gold coin to pay the physician and all my funeral expenses.' ”

The tears were raining down my cheeks; I could not speak. There was no selfish feeling in my heart. My distress at the thought of his death was overwhelming. The impression that he had anything to will, or, if he had, of his willing it to me, had never entered my mind. I cannot dwell upon this scene. When I could control my voice I talked long, earnestly and lovingly to him, and I prayed as I never prayed before, or since, that his life might be spared. As the night advanced he fell into a sleep. In less than an hour he awoke and seemed much worse. I dispatched a messenger for the physician, who arrived in a few minutes. All that the arts of medicine and loving hands could do were done, but my strange friend and unexpected benefactor never spoke again. Shortly after midnight he breathed his last. I pass over the details of the funeral and of my great grief.

The peddler was now my confederate. Through him I gained a little information indicating that Captain Brannan had gone West. Feeling certain that he

would never return to C——, I packed up all the possessions of my late friend, and, being now provided with sufficient income, used economically, to provide for my wants, and to travel, I again set out in quest of the fugitive. My shrewd ally kept close watch on Madeline's movements, and, under promise of liberal reward, he was to report to me all that might occur. I kept him advised of my address; I wandered from place to place for several months, occasionally using my disguise as a fortune-teller, which proved a source of revenue and kept me from encroaching upon the principal bequeathed to me. I heard at intervals from my peddler-spy, but nothing of importance developed until after the lapse of two years.

A letter came from my agent, stating that Madeline had suddenly left C——, and her destination was Lawrence, as he had learned from the servant girl living with her. It chanced that at the time of receiving this message I was in the State in which Lawrence was situated, and could reach the town soon after Madeline's arrival. I was sure she had gone there for the purpose of meeting or finding Captain Brannan, and I hastened to the place. I was so thoroughly disguised that I had no fear of her recognizing me if we should meet. As Lawrence was not a large place, I soon discovered her presence. I kept a close watch on her movements, but in such a way as not to arouse suspicions that she was being observed. The second evening after my arrival, just before dark, she left her lodgings and walked out of town in the direction of the neighboring town of Fremont. I kept

her in view, but remained at such a distance as not to attract her attention. About half a mile out a man came, meeting her. They stopped and conversed for some time, and then came together towards the town. I stepped behind a tree on the roadside, and as they passed I heard but one word, "Cairo." I followed them. On reaching the edge of the town they separated. No one saw them except myself, and neither of them saw me. I kept the man in view until, in the centre of the town, he suddenly turned into an open doorway, leading, as I discovered, to a hall used for secret lodge meetings. When I reached the entrance to the stairway, the man had disappeared in the hall above. I was in a quandary as to how to proceed.

I believed the man was Captain Brannan; still I was not certain. My determination was to wreak sudden and terrible vengeance the moment I met him, but I felt I must act cautiously, so as not to make any mistake. After consideration, I concluded to station myself near the stairway and wait for the breaking up of the lodge meeting. About ten o'clock twenty or twenty-five men came out. They separated in groups, some going in one direction, some in another. I peered into every face, but, as there was no light in the entrance, and not even any starlight that night, I did not recognize any one bearing resemblance to the object of my search.

I walked past the house where Madeline was staying, and seeing everything dark, and no signs of any one being up, I went to my room at the hotel resolved

to be out early and on the alert. I felt satisfied that if Captain Brannan was located near, I could not fail to find him, and I preferred to meet him face to face in the day light. On reflection I was glad I missed recognizing him, if, indeed, he was among those departing from the hall. Being among friends, he would have been protected and my efforts for vengeance frustrated. The next morning as I sauntered along the street I saw a negro servant leave the house where Madeline was lodging. I fell in with him and made some inquiries about the town. After a while I asked him if a lady had not recently become a boarder in the house he just came out of.

“‘Yes, boss,’ he said, ‘a lady cum dere a few days ago; but she dun gone now, sah.’”

“‘Gone! why, I saw her last night.’”

“‘She dere las’ night, boss, but she not dere dis mawning.’”

“‘When did she leave and where did she go?’ I asked this question as carelessly as I could, not wishing to show any special interest, but I was greatly excited. From my observations I knew there was but one boarder in that house, and that he could be speaking of no other than the person I was shadowing.

“‘De lady went out las’ ebening, and when she cum back, told de folks dat de country friends she ’spected to meet here had cum to town and she was gwine home with ’em.’”

“I was dumfounded at hearing this. The negro noticed my look of discomfiture and asked:

“‘Did you know de lady?’”

"‘No,’ I said impatiently.

"‘I’se sorry, boss,’ he responded, with a sly wink, ‘dat she got away ’fore you had a chance to make er mash. She was mighty ’tractive lookin’ gal, sure and sartin.’

"I was willing for him to think I was only seeking an amour, and said no more.

"I was not long in ascertaining beyond all doubt that Madeline had left Lawrence. I knew her too well to entertain for a moment the thought of her going without being accompanied by the man she had met. I reasoned that some plan of meeting had been arranged. I remembered now that I heard the word ‘Cairo.’ With this clew I considered what course they would take to reach that point. It would be impossible for them to go by a steamboat from Lawrence without its being known. It was a long distance to the nearest railroad station on line running to Cairo. I concluded to go to this station and see what I could discover. On reaching it I learned from the ticket agent that a woman answering the description I gave of Madeline had purchased a ticket to Cairo. The man had probably boarded the train without a ticket, to escape recognition, or had gone to another station. I was satisfied that if Madeline had gone to Cairo the one I specially sought would be there, too. I started on the next train for Cairo. On arriving there, careful inquiry convinced me that Madeline, accompanied by a man, had landed on the preceding train. They had stopped at a restaurant and lodging house near the depot, but had departed only a short time before

I reached the house. In conversation with the proprietor I gained sufficient points to convince me that the man was none other than Captain Brannan. I could find no further trace until, some six weeks later, I entered a cheap boarding house, where the same two had lodged. The landlady's description of the woman was so exact that I knew there could be no mistake. I learned that the man had been drinking heavily all the time, had spent everything he had and both were in a state of complete destitution. I was informed by the landlady that when they left a week previous they were simply vagabonds, and the only shelter they were likely to secure would be in deserted barns or stables—that if I wished to find them I need not look in any other places. The landlady spoke of a peculiar liver-colored mark on the left wrist of the man. It was a birthmark. I had often observed such a mark on Captain Brannan. It was mostly hid by the cuffs he wore, but in his present destitution he was cuffless, and the mark would not escape observation. This mark was so peculiar in shape and appearance that when it was accurately described I knew beyond all doubt the identity of Madeline's companion. My search was renewed with great diligence. I gloated over the destitution and suffering of the guilty wretches, but I was not satisfied. I had vowed to hunt him to the death. Days and nights I spent in the slums eagerly following everything that indicated a clew. Months passed. The exposure to which I subjected myself at last brought on a severe attack of rheumatism. For more than a year I was confined to my bed, and for three

years longer I was unable to do more than barely move about the house in which I had secured board and lodging. After five years' confinement I began to mend, and by the end of six years was restored to my former strength. Again the old passion stirred in my heart. I resolved to do at once what I was on the point of doing when stricken down with disease; namely, return to Lawrence and see what I could learn of the life of Captain Brannan previous to the night on which he and Madeline had fled to Cairo. A few months ago I visited that locality and became conversant with a most remarkable history up to a certain point. In order to solve the sequel I have come to this place."

Herman Clark had listened with close attention during the long recital, and as Stephen Pye paused, he said:

"Am I right in conjecturing that this remarkable history has some connection with Mrs. Brannan, who recently came to Corinth?"

"Yes. I know more of her history than she knows herself. As you are sworn to secrecy and pledged to aid me in my project, I will tell you the strange discovery I made on visiting Lawrence. You remember I told you about Madeline meeting a man on the road leading to Fremont. This was a small town only four miles from Lawrence. On making inquiries I learned that a Captain Brannan had lived at Fremont, but had suddenly disappeared a few years ago. At Fremont I easily ascertained all the particulars. In comparing dates, it was clear to me that very soon after Captain

Brannan had deserted Madeline on discovering my presence in C—— he had landed in the town of Fremont and opened a law office. Having ability and being prepossessing in appearance he soon became well acquainted with the people. In a short time his attentions were directed toward a Mrs. Gardiner, a widow, with an only daughter, about twelve years of age, who was then absent at school. It appears that the mother of this widow was then living and favored his addresses. After a brief courtship the marriage took place. For nearly a year to all appearances they lived happily together. One afternoon he told his wife that he was going over to Lawrence to attend a lodge meeting that night, that he might be late in returning and that she need not be uneasy. He kissed her good-bye and started for Lawrence. The wife was not alarmed when he failed to return that night, concluding that he had remained with some friend and would be home in the morning. As the day advanced, she became uneasy, and a messenger was despatched to Lawrence, who brought back the intelligence that Captain Brannan had attended the lodge meeting and separated from his friends about ten o'clock to return home, as they supposed. Days, weeks and months passed, but not the slightest trace of Captain Brannan dead or alive was discovered. A few thought that he had deserted his wife, but the general belief accorded with the wife's opinion, that he had accidentally fallen from a rude bridge spanning a deep and rapid stream, and over which he would have to pass on his way home. Every effort was made to find

the body. You now know from my story why the search was fruitless. On hearing all these particulars, I could easily understand the mysterious meeting and disappearance at Lawrence. There could be no doubt but Madeline had in some way learned of his living with another woman at Fremont, and she had come to Lawrence and notified him that if he did not meet her there she would appear at his home and expose him. She evidently received reply telling her where and on what night to meet him. It is now approaching seven years since his disappearance, and under the laws of this State, as I understand, the widow or supposed widow will be entitled to receive the life insurance money. Mrs. Brannan is innocent of all wrong, and I am not interested in defeating her claim, but I am just now pursuing a clew by which I hope to bring the dead back to life. Ah! if I succeed, it will be a short life and one more bitter, more cruel than the grave."

As he uttered these words, the light of an insatiable vengeance shone in his eyes.

"What is the nature of this clew?" asked Mr. Clark.

"Sometime ago I obtained a roster of Captain Brannan's company, and I have written to all whose addresses I could learn, inquiring if they had seen or heard lately of the captain of their company. Recently I received a letter from one who was in his company, stating that at a soldiers' reunion in Springfield he met a comrade of this same company, who told him that he had seen Captain Brannan only a few months ago—the comrade was certain it was their old

captain, although he was now known by another name. The writer had forgotten the name of the place where this comrade now lived, but he knew that he had at one time resided in Henderson county, near Corinth, and that his name was Alfred Gibson. Now, if you can assist me in finding anyone who can furnish information concerning the present address of Gibson, you will do me a great service."

"I know every family in this county, and if Gibson has a relative, friend or correspondent in this section I will find it out."

CHAPTER XI.

THE OLD MAIDS' CLUB.

“For who would bear the whips and thorns of doubt,
The oppressor's wrong, the old maid's contumely.
The pangs of untold love, the priest's delay,
The insolence of rivals, and the sneers
That bachelors from womankind must take—
But that the dread of something after marriage,
That yet untried condition, from whose bonds
No victim can be freed, puzzles the will,
And makes us rather bear the life we have
Than risk another that we know not of!”

—*Watson.*

SHORTLY after Miss Gardiner returned from her visit to Miss Barnard a social party was arranged for at the home of Judge Triston. The commodious and elegantly furnished dwelling afforded comfortable accommodation for a large gathering. A number of the acquaintances Miss Gardiner had made during her recent visit were invited, together with a much larger number of her friends in Corinth. Among the former were Herman Clark, John Gage, James St. Clair, Lena Barnard and Lizzie Gage, and among the latter were Harry Thorne, Harvey St. Clair, Frank Burton and Rose German. The last named has been only inci-

dentally mentioned heretofore, but deserves a more formal introduction. She was not only a very handsome blonde, but a bright and witty conversationalist. She had special talent in two lines. She was a fine singer and an adept in getting up amateur theatricals, cantatas and the like. At every gathering she was the life of the party, and always looked to as the generalissimo of all procedures. It was only since the arrival in Corinth of Miss Gardiner that the fair Rose had found a rival in the honors of leadership. There was, however, no envy or jealousy between them. They became at once the most intimate and loving friends, and the greatest pleasure to each was in doing the other honor. In a spirit of jest these two, in connection with Lena Barnard and Lizzie Gage, had selected five other young ladies of about their own age and formed what they called the "club of nine old maids." None of them had yet crossed the dead line of twenty-five, and they could therefore afford to jest upon the subject. The club was formed soon after the acquaintance was made at the fortune-teller's cabin, and several meetings had been held at the houses of members. Mysterious rumors had floated out to the ears of their young gentlemen acquaintances of the sad and forlorn proceedings of these secret and melancholy gatherings. Judge Triston, who was in full sympathy with all the gayeties and sport of the young people, announced that the party at his house was not only given in honor of his guest, Miss Gardiner, but also in honor of the "Old Maids' Club."

At the time designated, a very large company assembled. The early part of the evening was spent in informal musical and literary performances, in which Rose shone as a charming songstress and Katie as an accomplished reader. Others contributed vocally and instrumentally, and an hour was delightfully passed in this way. Then the party resolved itself into a conversation club, with the understanding that, one at a time of the company should be selected by ballot, who would be required to announce a subject and for at least five minutes test his or her colloquial powers in entertaining, while all the rest remained attentive listeners. The first ballot taken resulted in a large majority for Rose. Her ready wit and intelligence never failed to extricate her creditably. She arose and announced as her subject: "Old Maids; or, What is the Matter With Us?"

"My theme is suggested by a recent occurrence in one of the meetings of our club of nine old maids. While we were commenting on our 'lone and lorn estate,' it was mentioned that a certain lady, known to all of us as exceedingly homely, aged, unprepossessing and unattractive to the last degree, was about to be married. Our astonishment found expression in this exclamation of one of our number, 'Good Lord! What is the matter with us?'

"On hearing of the commotion aroused in our meeting, Mr. John Gage sent to us the following original and consoling poem, entitled, '

“WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH US?

“There's nine old maids of renown
Ranging in age, from forty down,
All living in style in or near Corinth town,
With a smile for all, for none a frown.
They each have trouble, but no trouble with beaux;
Neither Lena, Lizzie, Lulie nor Rose.
There's Eleanor, Grace, Katie and Carrie
Vow and declare not, but they each want to marry.
And Sallie still single! Oh, dear, what a pity!
She sighs at the good luck of some in the city.
When they hear of the marriage of another old maid,
They have a called meeting and begin to upbraid
John, James, Harry, Herman, Harvey or Gus
For running away with some other girl
And leaving all nine of them still in a muss,
With eyebrows to reblacken and hair to recurly.
Indeed 'tis enough to make any maid fuss,
And they yell out together,
‘Others can marry, what's the matter with us?’ ”

“With this introduction, I now proceed to answer the momentous question, What is the matter with us? This is no idle question. The fact is, we have no *idol*, and in one sense that is what's the matter with us; and because we are the *idol* of no one suggests the question before us, and to its solution I now ‘all my powers engage.’ We are nine old maids, and will take an inventory of stock on hand to see if we can thereby learn what's the matter with us. To begin at the ground, floor, we have nine pair of feet. Look at them. They are of well assorted sizes. It seems to us that any taste might be suited. In corns and bun-

ions we have no more than the usual crop. Surely the defect cannot lie so near the foundation. Why, the Chicago girl who went out to shoot a rusty load from her brother's pistol, and who, in a thoughtless mood, only aimed a yard in front of her, and thereby shot through the middle of her foot, she got married. With us, in the matter of feet, there is no lack, no deficiency. That's not what's the matter with us. Next, we have nine pair of hands. Do they not compare favorably with any other nine pair that you can pick out from those who have worn the coveted wedding ring? What is the matter with our forefingers? Would they not grace the pledge of longed-for bliss? Yes, our hands are fair and comely, oft employed in deeds of kindness and usefulness; and, besides, we occasionally wash them—always after shaking hands with a man. Surely there is nothing the matter with our hands; and the question still remains, What is the matter with us? Nine mouths; ah! here is a wide open subject for contemplation and investigation. As to size, they come within the regulation standard. And the teeth, they are all good. We know that, for we paid a good price for them. The St. Louis girl, who had to be reminded by the dentist, when she opened her mouth, that he did not wish to stand inside, got married. That makes it clear that the mouth is not what's the matter with us. Nine pair of ruby lips! innocent of contamination with lips tainted by tobacco, cloves, and the like, and nine tongues—whew! here is quantity, quality and variety—all degrees of volubility, and every kind of tongue except the short and slow.

If you once heard us in our meetings you would not accuse us of being deficient in tongue. No, no, we are not lacking in this commodity, and want of tongue is not what's the matter with us. Nine pair of eyes—dark, blue, gray, brown—all the standard colors represented—neither short-sighted nor cross-eyed, but bright, liquid, and as capable of looking love as any eyes in the market; no drawback in the eyesight—that's not what's the matter with us. Nine pair of ears, all perfect—could hear a whispered proposal at almost any distance. Nine heads, with more or less in them and on them—waving tresses, light and dark, all of good quality, as can be certified by the merchant from whom same was obtained.

“Now, you have the inventory from foot to head, and what is the result? Why, we know—have seen for ourselves—that many with feet as big, with hands as dir—clean, with mouths as wide, with lips as innocent, with tongues as long, with eyes as bright, with ears as open, with tresses as waving, and with heads as empty—full, I mean, as ours, have got married just as easy as anything. Yet, alas! we are not taken. Oh, Lord, what is the matter with us?

“Well, as our charms of form and person cannot be gainsaid, and as others not half so fair and prepossessing have got there, the trouble must be in some other direction.

“Let us take a look at our accomplishments: First, then, as to our colloquial powers. No more, perhaps, need be said than was hinted at under the head of tongue. As for talking, we simply recognize no su-

perior, and challenge the world to produce our equal. The armless sleeves, the worn and haggard faces of those around us, all bear incontestable evidence of our proficiency as talkers. So that's not what's the matter with us. Then, too, among us is to be found the elocutionist, with talking eyes and all the arts of modulated voice. Added to the natural charms above enumerated, such accomplishments of art ought to be irresistible. Alas! alas! alas! Good Lord, what is the matter with us? Again, among us are to be found the charming musicians, who might move the very soul of Love with their exquisite instrumental and vocal accomplishments; and yet those who cannot sing a lullaby (one of the first requisites of that state for which we pine) get married. Oh, it makes us sing out in mournful strains, What is the matter with us?

"Well, to sum it all up: our inventory shows that the trouble is not in lack of personal charms nor of accomplishments. We have feet and hands, heads and tongues, and we walk and talk, sing and laugh a good deal like others, and we think a good deal better than many others, who have nothing the matter with them. Then it cannot be on account of defects, for those far more defective get a free pass and hearty welcome into the glorious Beulahland. If it is not in the defects, as we have clearly established, then there is but one other thing that can be the matter with us—and that is our virtues.

"Ah! here, at last is the true answer to the momentous question: Our charms and character and person are of that finer mould which awakens no re-

sponse in the coarse and less refined natures around us. What is the matter with us? Simply this: our inestimable worth is unappreciated; we live in a realm so high, exalted and pure that we are not understood by the common herd, and our only hope for affinity and appreciation is in Heaven, where there is neither marriage nor giving in marriage."

Great applause greeted the close of Rose German's impromptu speech. A general talk followed, in which all who could get attention took part. In a little while the theme was voted exhausted, and another ballot was taken, resulting in the selection of Katie Gardiner as the next speaker. She was not prepared with a subject, but, reflecting a moment, the incident at the fortune-teller's cabin occurred to her mind, and she arose and stated her subject: "Fortune-Telling; or the Shrewd Trick of a Bachelor."

"To illustrate my theme, I will relate a story. Once upon a time, in company with some friends, who are present here, I visited a fortune-teller, living on the cliff near by. We found others there, who are also present to-night. I am, therefore, not without witnesses to the truth of my narrative. My fortune was told. The seer readily found for me what I had never been able to find for myself—a man. According to his views, there is nothing the matter with me. He described the one who was shortly to appear and rescue me from the Old Maids' Club, and even went so far as to give the initials of his name. Here the shrewd trick of the bachelor comes in. One of the

gentlemen present laid claim not only to the description, but also to the initials."

As she said this a mischievous smile overspread her face. She delighted to tease. The part Herman Clark had played she regarded simply as a pleasantry and a good joke on his part. To her mind there was no significance in the words of the fortune-teller, and nothing in the incident except the fun to be extracted from it.

"Now," she continued, as she took up a card from the centre-table, "here is the evidence in the case. On one side of this card is written the words of the seer, describing my coming Romeo, with a bracketed reference to the other side for his name. Shall I read it?"

"Yes; by all means!" exclaimed a dozen voices.

Miss Gardiner looked quizzically at Mr. Clark, who was quietly laughing, and who nodded for her to proceed. He knew that the card had been changed, but was sure from her manner that she was unaware of it, and he was anticipating a surprise, which he hoped to use to his advantage.

"Listen, then: 'He is of fine personal appearance; nearly six feet in height, and well proportioned; wears a full beard and mustache; has regular features, deep blue eyes, dark hair and fair complexion. There are signs of trouble, but light appears behind the shadows, which augurs a happy conclusion afterwhile. (For initials see other side.)'

"Attention, all, now! I will reverse the card and read the name of the scheming bachelor. She turned

it over and read aloud the name, 'Harvey St. Clair.' The card dropped from her trembling fingers; it was not the name she expected to read. Blank amazement was pictured on her face.

"What is the meaning of this?" exclaimed Harry Thorne. "You said it was the name of one present that night at the cabin on the cliff. I was there, but did not see Harvey St. Clair."

"I do not understand it," said Miss Gardiner in great confusion, picking up the card and looking at it intently. "I certainly saw a different name when I looked at it before."

"Mr. St. Clair is a very shrewd jester, indeed!" sneered Herman Clark. "Doubtless he can explain the forgery, if, as you say, the card has been changed."

The hot blood mounted to St. Clair's face at these words. He darted an angry glance at Clark, but, restraining himself, addressed his words to Miss Gardiner:

"I am as greatly surprised as you are. When you read my name I was dumfounded. I cannot imagine how that writing appears on one of my cards. Whether so written by accident or design, it was without my knowledge or consent."

"I am satisfied of that," replied Miss Gardiner. She recognized in the expression of his face and tone of voice perfect sincerity and truthfulness. She had now regained composure. "Perhaps the fortune-teller has found means of making the substitution to further mystify us. The exchange, however made, has only added zest to the amusing incident. Let us think no

more about it. The whole matter is of no consequence—only a good joke all around. I see Mrs. Triston is waiting for us to repair to the refreshment room, and I move that the Conversation Club immediately transform itself into an eating club.”

During the remainder of the evening Miss Gardiner showed no trace of annoyance at what had occurred. She seemed not to have thought of it again. But when the company had departed she retired to the privacy of her own room, and, sitting down, mused long and seriously over the affair. She had left the card on the table in the parlor, but she remembered every word, and knew it was precisely the same she had read to her mother the next day after the visit to the cabin on the cliff, and that the name on the reverse side was Herman S. Clark. Now, there was another name, and for the first time it occurred to her that the capital letters were the same; now she remembered, too, that the letters “S” and “C” as arranged on the chart were close together. The name of Harvey St. Clair certainly answered for both description and initials. An incredulous smile arose as she asked herself if there could be any significance in the strange fortune told. She was not superstitious, still she felt an interest in musing over the matter. She had scarcely given it a thought before. From her first introduction to St. Clair, when presented by her friend, Harry Thorne, shortly after his locating in Corinth, she had experienced a friendly interest and pleasure in his acquaintance. No thought of love had obtruded itself at any time, but as their intimacy in-

creased, he being a frequent visitor at the house, the attraction had imperceptibly increased. Now the incidents of the evening called her attention to him in such a way as to cause her to analyze her sentiments towards him. She had seen more of Mr. Clark than of St. Clair, but while she regarded the former as very pleasant and agreeable company, it now occurred to her mind that he did not impress her so congenially in tastes and thoughts as did Mr. St. Clair. With such thoughts, vague and undefined as to any decided impressions concerning her two admirers, she sought her couch for the few remaining hours of the night and soon fell into the undisturbed repose befitting a heart-free member of the Old Maid's Club.

While the guests of Judge Triston were regaling themselves with the ample refreshments in the dining room, Harry Thorne found an opportunity to reach the parlor unobserved, take from the centre-table Harvey St. Clair's card and to replace the one he had taken bearing the name of Herman S. Clark.

CHAPTER XII.

THE DROMIO LOVERS.

“Of all the torments, all the cares,
With which our lives are curst;
Of all the plagues a lover bears,
Sure rivals are the worst !
By partners in each other kind,
Afflictions easier grow ;
In love alone we hate to find
Companions of our woe.”

—*Walsh.*

DURING the following six or seven weeks both Clark and St. Clair were regular callers upon Miss Gardiner. They seldom met at Judge Triston's house, but in the instances when it did occur they showed a courteous and polite friendliness of manner. Clark was even cordial, and deported himself as though he was meeting his dearest friend. To all appearances they were like old friends visiting a mutual friend. Each knew that the other was trying to win the special favor of Miss Gardiner, but no reference to this was ever in any way made to each other, or by either to others. Katie, of course, was not insensible to the fact that she was an object of interest to both. But as their attentions were confined to purely social and friendly intercourse, she enjoyed the company of either, and

politely accepted whichever proffered himself as escort to church, parties, concerts or in drives over the excellent pikes for a simple pleasure ride, or in visits to the Gages, Barnards, or other friends.

One evening as Mrs. Brannan observed her daughter dressing for reception of company, she smilingly asked:

"Which one is it this time, Katie? You appear as well pleased and expectant for one as the other. I have been vainly trying to discover which of your two special admirers you prefer as company."

"And have you seen no difference in the care I bestow upon my toilet, or in the cordiality of my smiles or demeanor?"

"Not the slightest."

"Well, I am glad of that. Do you know, mother, I have designated Mr. St. Clair and Mr. Clark as my Dromio lovers, and I am trying to find out which is which?"

"I am sure they are very unlike. Your Dromio of Corinth and your Dromio of Memphis have very little personal resemblance."

"You forget the fortune-teller's words, which, though originally written on Mr. Clark's card, were so mysteriously transferred to that of Mr. St. Clair. The capital letters in their names are the same; eyes and hair of like color; height and weight closely corresponding, and both wearing full beard and mustache. The seer said that my fate was about to appear, and lo! these two came simultaneously. How

am I to tell which is my destiny until a fuller revelation is made to my waiting consciousness?"

"Yes; I had forgotten all about that foolishness, and supposed you had, too. I see you have a very grave problem to solve," laughingly replied Mrs. Brannan. "But you have not told me which Dromio you are expecting this evening?"

"It is Mr. Clark. We are going for a call upon Rose German, to enjoy her delightful singing and charming company."

"Well, your own discernment will have to solve the remarkable obscurity of the seer's words. Mr. St. Clair made the most favorable impression upon me at first, but latterly I have been, at least, equally impressed with Mr. Clark."

"As to the deliverance of the fortune-teller, that was a mere coincidence, and exerts no influence over my mind. The accidental humor of the affair alone causes me to remember it. While the initials and some points of physique are the same, there is no resemblance in features or in thoughts and tastes. St. Clair is poetical in nature, full of bright fancies, and he soars with vivid imagination into the realms of philosophy, while Clark is matter-of-fact, and deals only in prose when discussing the problems and conditions of life."

"Are not the unimaginative the most practical and useful?"

"Oh, I may find that my Dromio of Corinth has just enough of poetry to sweeten and make endurable the hard realities of life, and not so much as to in-

terfere with its practical and severe duties," replied Katie, with a gay laugh, as she started for the parlor to receive her Dromio of Memphis, whose arrival had just been announced.

It chanced that the contemplated visit to Rose German had to be deferred. She had not been informed of the proposed call, and was not at home when Clark and Katie reached her house. The evening being too cool for a pleasure stroll, they returned, and enjoyed an uninterrupted evening's conversation in the parlor. This was especially agreeable to Clark. While often in each other's company, it was seldom that they had been together when others were not present or near by. Katie's lively disposition inclined her to regard three or more as company, while two savored of dullness. It had been her suggestion that on Mr. Clark's next call they would pay Rose a visit, to which he had, of course, politely agreed, although secretly disappointed. Now seated by her side, with the whole evening before them, Clark strove to appear to the best advantage; and Katie, remembering the conversation with her mother, gave her attention to mentally comparing the matter-of-fact and practical Dromio with the imaginative and poetical one.

The conversation touched upon many topics of literature and religion. The reading of both was extensive and varied. Katie had rightly judged from previous intercourse that Clark was not of the imaginative turn. His observations always bore upon the practical conditions of life. He was severe in his condemnation of every phase of evil, and strong in his

commendation of virtue. Perhaps, he really believed all he said. Many sincerely believe that sin is sin and ought to be avoided, yet follow it unhesitatingly, regularly, and even systematically. It is not intended to delineate Clark's character, but to leave the events as recorded in this true history to disclose to the reader its real nature. Whatever of evil there was, none was suggested by his words when speaking about vice or virtue. The former was never winked at and the latter never sneered at. He never expressed doubts of the truth of any orthodox tenets. Many have honest misgivings about doctrines universally upheld by the advocates of Christianity; if he had any misgivings he did not express them. As has been stated, Katie possessed a religious nature. She revered God in the joys of life, as well as in its duties; her pleasures were pure, and her delight in them was a part of her enjoyment of God's goodness and love. Serious and solemn experiences of life did not more remind her of religious obligations than did the gay and happy ones. Like a loving child of a true and noble father, who cherishes for that father the same sentiments of love in its hours of play as it does at all other times; that was Katie's idea of her Heavenly Father at all times. To such a nature the discourse of Mr. Clark could not be otherwise than agreeable.

The discussion of moral themes continued for a considerable time—during which a very favorable impression was made upon the mind of our heroine—when the subject was changed by her relating the dream she had had concerning her uncle. Mr. Clark

was much interested in the recital, and commented freely upon the strange features of the vision.

“Were you not influenced to make an effort to communicate with your uncle?” he asked.

“Yes; I wrote a letter addressed to him at Philadelphia, but it was returned to me, in accordance with instructions on the envelope, if not called for in ten days. Here is the letter,” she continued, taking it up from the table; “you may see what kind of a letter I wrote under the influence of my dream.”

“Have you then abandoned all hope of hearing from him?” he asked, as he received the letter from her hand.

“It can scarcely be said that I had any hope to abandon. Mother thought it folly to write. It has been many years since the last message was received, and that was of a nature to preclude the idea of further intercourse or of response, if my letter had reached him. It may be that he is dead, or that he is traveling in Europe. Mother says he repeatedly spoke about his intention of spending a number of years in wandering over the Old World.”

“Was he financially able to neglect business and spend his days in traveling?”

“He was reputed to be worth over a hundred thousand in stocks and bonds, preferring to never invest in real estate; and having retired from active business nearly eighteen years ago, he has been free to wander the world over, if he chose. I think he might have shared his affluence with his only niece, who never offended him; but if he could be so hard and unfor-

giving to a brother, it is not to be expected that any considerations of kinship would move his heart. However, I did not write with any thought of his riches; but only because the dream suggested sickness. I do not believe in dreams; nevertheless, my action in writing shows that we are more or less influenced by things in which we have little or no faith."

"Are you not disregarding the words of Joel: 'And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy; your old men shall dream dreams; your young men shall see visions'?"

"You forget that St. Peter, in his address on the day of Pentecost, applied those words of Joel to what took place at that time. You will have to produce other Scripture than that to convince me that my dream creation was in the nature of a prophecy."

"Well, I will not try to overcome your unbelief in visions. I am a skeptic in that line myself. In suggesting that there might be significance in what seemed to point to a reconciliation with your alienated relative, I only wished to comfort you. The view you said your mother entertained of the matter is to my mind the correct one. You will, doubtless, have to look for a fortune in some other direction than from the stubborn uncle; that one will come, I can predict on a better basis than that furnished by the vagaries of a dream. 'Your face is your fortune, my pretty maid.'" With an arch look and bright smile, he uttered these words as he rose to take his leave.

The story of the rich uncle gave Clark food for thought. He reasoned, aside from any meaning in

the dream, that it might be possible, if Jared Gardiner could yet be found, to so represent the loveliness of his niece to him as to produce a change of mind. He determined to make an effort to discover the whereabouts of this uncle. The very next day he took steps, through correspondence, to get the address of the very best detective in Philadelphia. This obtained, he forwarded a liberal fee, with instructions to spare no pains in ascertaining what had become of one Jared Gardiner, who had lived in that city. He imparted to the officer all the details of dates and description that he had gathered from Katie's conversation. In the course of a few months Mr. Clark was overjoyed at receiving the intelligence that the detective had found the object of his search. A Jared Gardiner, who in person and age answered to the description of Katie's uncle, was still living in Philadelphia; he was in feeble health, and had been confined to his room (most of the time to his bed) for several months past. This information was obtained without the knowledge of Mr. Gardiner that any inquiries were being made concerning him. This was in accordance with the directions given by Clark. On receiving the report he at once determined to go to Philadelphia, but arranged that no one should know of it. He obtained a leave of absence from the bank on the plea that a matter of business required his presence in Chicago. From that city he wrote letters to a few of his friends; among them, one to Katie, saying that business had called him to the West for a few days; and immediately took the fastest train to the East, arriving with-

out delay in Philadelphia, where we will leave him for the present. Later on, the results of his mission shall be recorded.

On the Sunday after Herman Clark's lengthy visit to Katie, Harvey St. Clair made a call.

In order to compare and the better to decide between her Dromios, Katie led the conversation with St. Clair into the same channels she had discussed with Clark. She soon found that St. Clair had many honest misgivings about orthodox teachings. At first she was greatly disappointed at this, and unfavorably compared his uncertainty of belief with the positive and unwavering assertions of Mr. Clark. But as the discussion proceeded she became more and more impressed with the thought that St. Clair was more reverent and devout in expressing difficulties that troubled him than Clark was in asserting undoubted faith. This aroused her interest. She, as has been stated, possessed a deep religious nature, and was never disturbed by the doctrinal differences which have proved a stumbling block to so many. She understood enough to satisfy her; the rest was considered immaterial. She was certain that she knew Christ, believed in Him fully, and followed Him wholly—anything outside of that gave her no concern. While not shocked at the reverently expressed doubts of St. Clair, she was surprised to find that, while apparently desirous of doing so, he could not accept the simple faith of the Gospel.

“Do not the marvelous achievements of Chris-

tianity satisfy you of the divinity of its author?" she at length asked.

"I readily and even gladly admit that Christ, without money or sword, surrounded by a few poor, unlettered fishermen, set in motion an influence that has worked wonders in a short period of the world's history. That influence has spread over continents, crossed oceans, traversed valleys, and ascended mountains; and its effects have ever been benign and elevating; yet just what is true and what is not, puzzles me. When I read church history, written by its own highest lights, I feel uncomfortable."

"Why, in what way?"

"We are told that in the first century several errors, as they were called by one part of the church, made their appearance, and heresies sprang up. Some denied the divinity of Christ; some claimed that Jesus had not a real but only an apparent human body, and that consequently his sufferings on the cross were only in appearance. Others, again, thought that He had a real body, and was merely a man, but that at the time of His baptism, Christ, a superior being, descended on Him, continued in Him during his ministry, and leaving Him, when He was condemned, ascended again to Heaven; so that not Christ, but Jesus died. Then on down through all the centuries the Councils, Conferences, Assemblies of the Church have issued contradictory decrees as to what was Scripture and what was not. What troubles me is, that if Christians in the first century could not agree as to what Christ taught, how am I to know?"

"Is that all that disquiets you."

"Not quite; I cannot understand about so many religions in the world, with a measure of good in every one of them. The adherents of each are positive that they have the true light, and that all others are in darkness. There is Fetichism, the crudest form of religion; it has a creed and a system; has its order of ministers, places of worship and altars. There is something of Fetich worship among us. Sailors cling to port on a Friday and weigh anchor on Sunday. We believe in charms, amulets and unlucky days. Then there are many other great religions—Zoroastrianism, Brahmanism, Buddhism, Confucianism and other isms, all having a moral code, and asking, if not answering the question, What shall I do to be saved? The devotees of each believe they, and they only, have the true religion. Now, with all the different religions of the world and the differences among Christian believers, I ask, not captiously, but reverently, What is Truth? I do not believe in the religions I have named or in that of Greece or of ancient Egypt, or of the Norseman, or of Islam; but I do believe in the religion of Christ; yet to what degree or extent I can accept it, is the problem I have never been able to solve."

"Well, Mr. St. Clair," replied Katie, "I think I shall have to preach you a little sermon, if you will give me attention."

"I may have gone to sleep, or, at least, felt like doing so, under the voice of regular divines, but I assure you of not only a wakeful but studious hearing."

“The thoughts I present are not original to myself. Years ago I heard a sermon that gave me great satisfaction, and the points have ever since remained distinct in my mind. I cannot give the discourse in its entirety and beauty; I wish I could. When I have given the leading thoughts of this sermon, the application in answer to your views will be obvious. The text was, ‘Follow Me.’ No human being that had ever lived or would ever live, declared the divine, was fully qualified to use those words. While all desired to lead and all were averse to being led, still there was nowhere to be found a perfect leader. The best, the purest, the most learned needed themselves to be led. Who, then, could say, ‘Follow me?’ Yet the necessity for an infallible guide was apparent. In all nature, wherever the necessity for anything exists, the thing itself is always to be found. If, therefore, the necessity existed that the race should have a pattern of life, a perfect guide, such an one must somewhere appear—where could mankind turn in search of one who could at all times be safely followed? Certainly not to the animal creation, for that is beneath us, and unworthy of our emulation; and among ourselves no leader can be accepted, for all need to be led themselves. If, then, we turn to the realm of angels, the next order above us, can any of them answer as a perfect model of life to us? Surely not; they are spirits; their conditions of life are dissimilar to ours, and therefore cannot exhibit an example of mortal or bodily life. If you look further—to God himself, the spirit, infinite, eternal, unchangeable, and invisible—

the same difficulty arises. Ours is not a spirit life, and we cannot pattern after a spirit's example. One to guide us perfectly must live as we live, be a partaker of our nature, and yet be sinless. A necessity exists for such a leader, and, according to the well-known laws of nature, every absolute want is provided for. The incarnation of Christ was a necessity to supply that want. Man is unfit as a pattern; God, impossible as one—God-man, the only logical solution to perfect leadership of mankind. If there was no other proof of the incarnation of the Son of God, the absolute necessity of such a union of God and man should be conclusive of the introduction into the world of such a being. Christ claims this dual nature. All Scripture corroborates His claim. No other in all the universe of God has or can have absolute authority and right to say, 'Follow me.'

"Now, Mr. St. Clair, you are disturbed because men in all ages and all countries have differed about matters of religion, when you are not asked to follow any man's opinions. Everybody desires to lead. The inevitable 'I told you so,' even in the most trivial affairs, is but the outcropping of this innate tendency to claim superior knowledge, and, yet it is evident that no mere man is competent to guide perfectly. The Gospel I accept is a very simple one, and the controversies of pretended leaders do not trouble me in the least. I recognize but One, and I follow Him in all things without doubts or waverings. I close my sermon with the exhortation that you cultivate a like faith."

“I confess that you have interested me in a thought entirely new to me. I will ponder it with an unprejudiced and earnest mind, and after doing so will frankly tell you how much or how little my views have been influenced by your discourse.”

CHAPTER XIII.

A VILLAINOUS PLOT.

“As thistles wear the softest down,
To hide their prickles till they’re grown,
And then declare themselves and tear
Whatever ventures to come near :
So a smooth knave does greater feats
Than one that idly rails and threats,
And all the mischief that he meant,
Does, like the rattlesnake, prevent.”

—*Butler.*

ONLY a short time previous to St. Clair’s dismissal from the bank in Memphis, he had discounted a promissory note for three hundred dollars. If the banker thought of this at the time of discharging him, he did not refer to it, as he knew another name was on the note, which would insure payment at maturity. Herman Clark had knowledge of the transaction, and was greatly surprised that Josiah Carter had affixed his name to the note. He was regarded as very miserly, and not disposed to do favors for any one. While known to possess considerable property, his reputation for fair dealing was bad. Josiah Carter’s character was well known to Clark, and when he discovered that St. Clair was likely to prove a formidable

rival in his love pursuit for the fair Katie, the matter of the note occurred to him, and he determined to cause as much annoyance to St. Clair as possible. He sent for Mr. Carter to notify him of date of maturity of the note.

"I need not assure you, Mr. Carter, of my friendship for you, and of my desire to serve you in any way I can," said Clark when the two were alone. "The bank with which I am now prominently connected appreciates your business and good will."

There was not the slightest foundation for this statement. He had never displayed any friendship for Carter, and the bank did not care a farthing for his business or good will, but he knew that Carter would be flattered by such words.

"Now, having a real interest in your welfare," he continued, "I wish to speak about a matter in which you are involved with Harvey St. Clair. It is well known that St. Clair had been going a pretty fast gait, spending money more freely than his salary justified. He found it necessary to raise funds. This he could not do without surety. One day he offered a note to be discounted, and, as it bore your name, the money was promptly furnished to him. After his dismissal, on account of intemperate habits, I looked at the note, and was convinced that the signature of your name was not genuine. Feeling sure that you had not signed the note, my object in seeking this interview is to advise you of its existence. I can understand how it all happened. St. Clair being in the bank at the time, and having charge of the notes, ex-

pected out of his salary to make payment, and prevent discovery of his use of your name. Now, as he is practically out of work, having but a meagre salary at Corinth, you will have to pay it all, if you did sign the note."

Mr. Clark spoke rapidly, not giving his listener an opportunity to interrupt him. His object was to suggest to Carter's mind the idea of forgery, relying on his unscrupulous nature to seize upon any pretext to avoid financial loss. He was not mistaken.

"Of course, I did not sign it!" exclaimed Mr. Carter. "I am not likely to put my name on notes of young spendthrifts."

"I was sure you did not," returned Clark, as a gleam of satisfaction sparkled in his eyes. "If you say nothing of my speaking to you about this, I can greatly assist you. On the day the note falls due, St. Clair will come here and ask you to sign a renewal. You will, of course, be astonished, and at first not understand what he is talking about; but when it appears that he has a note in bank with your endorsement, have him arrested for forgery. He has neither money nor friends, and as he left here in disgrace, you will have no trouble in establishing the charge."

"All right, Mr. Clark; I will follow your advice, and teach that young scapegrace a lesson for forging my name."

After some further conversation, in which both expressed great indignation at the crime of St. Clair, they separated. Herman Clark knew perfectly well that the signature was not a forgery, but he also knew

now that Carter would swear it was, and that was satisfactory to him.

A month later St. Clair stopped at the home of John Gage, on his way to Memphis. He spoke to his friend of being uneasy about his liability at the bank.

"The bank officials are not overly friendly to me," he said, "and Mr. Carter is a hard man. Now that I have left the locality, he may be harsh and ugly about renewing the note, as I agreed to pay it in full. I am unable to do more than make a small payment."

"You need not worry," replied John Gage. If he does not sign the renewal he will have to pay it himself. But how in the world did you get Josiah Carter to sign the note, in the first place?"

"On one occasion, more than a year ago, he was in the bank, and asked me to verify some calculations he had made concerning a certain transaction. I did so, and discovered he had made a mistake in his figures, by which he would have suffered considerable loss. He was greatly pleased at having the error corrected in time, and ever afterward showed, for one of his nature, unusual friendliness. When a time came in which I was compelled to raise some money to meet an obligation resulting from speculation, I remembered his friendly deportment, and, as I had no one else to whom I could apply, I went out one day to his farm to ask his assistance. He and his two sons were in the field, loading the piles of shucked corn into a wagon. I had little hopes of my mission's proving successful; but, to my great surprise and gratification, he took the note from my hand and affixed his name

and returned it to me, without saying a word. Had I remained at the bank I should have been able to pay the note in full, but now I will have to entreat his further favor."

"I wonder that he did you the favor then, It would be quite characteristic of him to be ungracious now, except that his only escape from paying it himself will be in giving you time, for you, like myself, are proof against enforced collections."

"Very true," said St. Clair, smiling; "but I am glad to know that your condition in that and in all other respects is soon to be greatly improved."

"Yes," returned Gage; "I am now the happiest man in the world, with bright prospects in every direction. I have passed out of the shadow of doubt and distress into the bright sunshine of hope and happiness. Renew the note, as before, Harvey; and if you are not able to meet it next time, you need not trouble Carter; come to me."

Parting from his friend, St. Clair soon reached Memphis. The reception he met will be recorded in a subsequent chapter.

CHAPTER XIV.

BASENESS OF A RIVAL.

“Why should the sacred character of virtue
Shine on a villain’s countenance? Ye powers!
Why fixed you not a brand on treason’s front
That we might know t’ avoid perfidious mortals?”
—*Dennis.*

HERMAN CLARK, as we have seen, was a frequent visitor at Judge Triston’s home. From the night when he first saw the lovely Katie at the fortune-teller’s cabin, he determined to win her hand. He studied every art he could employ to accomplish this purpose. It was soon apparent to him that the mother’s influence over the daughter was very great; that the latter looked with longing reverence to the former for counsel and guidance. He, therefore, resolved to first gain the confidence and esteem of Mrs. Brannan. He was intelligent and artful; his pleasing address gave him ready opportunity for exercising his powers; unscrupulous and heartless, he could with consummate skill impress an unsuspecting nature with the idea that he was the most warm-hearted of men and the soul of honor. On several occasions he had engaged in long conversations with the mother and daughter on various moral themes. He was too wise

to speak of himself, but he eloquently commended in others the qualities of self-sacrifice, and all the noble and sincere purposes of life. When others were present to engage the attention of the daughter, he sought the companionship of the mother. Mrs. Brannan soon experienced a warm regard and very kindly liking for the young man, and looked upon his visits with pleasure. On one occasion they were seated on the opposite side of the parlor from Mrs. Triston, Harry Thorne and Katie. The conversation carried on by the one group was not heard by the other.

Clark felt sure he possessed the esteem of Mrs. Brannan, and he now sought to advance further in her confidence.

"It may appear unseemly in me, Mrs. Brannan," he said, "to refer to a subject of painful interest to you; yet, having heard but a meagre rumor, I should like to hear from your own lips the story of your sad bereavement. I am not prompted by curiosity; I only desire to more intelligently sympathize with one who has so kindly honored me with her friendship."

"The subject is not a forbidden one. I am even glad to speak to you of that period of my life toward which my thoughts are ever wandering. My home, as you have doubtless heard, was in Fremont, at the time of my marriage to Mr. Brannan. My wedded life with him was very brief. In one year after our union I was left desolate. During that year our home was congenial. He was affectionate and considerate—at no time was there any incompatibility of mind or temper. Two or three months previous to his dis-

appearance he indulged too freely in drink. This caused me uneasiness, but I did not upbraid or lecture him. He was not driven away by unpleasant scenes at home, as the ever-ready tongue of scandal has charged.

"One bright afternoon he told me he was going to Lawrence to attend a lodge meeting. He mentioned that it would probably be late before he could return, and hoped I would not be uneasy. As usual, on leaving, he kissed me, and with a bright smile and wave of his hand he started on the road to Lawrence, a town only four miles distant. I stood in the doorway watching him until he passed from view, but no thought or foreboding of evil entered my mind. I never saw him again. Not for a moment have I entertained the opinion that he deserted me. I am certain he met his death that night by accidentally falling into a rapid stream, over which he had to pass, and that the swift current carried his body away. Long search was made, but no trace was found to solve the mystery of his disappearance. Still I know that he is dead, and I hold his memory sacred."

"The theory of desertion is an insult to both the living and the dead, and I am surprised to hear such a suggestion was ever made," said Clark, although thoroughly convinced that the theory of desertion was the correct one. "Your sad story awakens a deep and earnest sympathy. I thank you for this privilege of sharing in the sad thoughts of your life."

"Your frank and sincere interest in my trouble is very grateful to me. But, to change the subject, I

just heard the name of Harvey St. Clair mentioned by Harry Thorne. I should like to inquire about him of one who has known him intimately. I believe you were associated with him in the bank at Memphis?"

"Oh! Mr. St. Clair is quite an agreeable young man. He possesses some very fine traits of character. His disposition is obliging and generous, and his faults, if he has any, are in the line of self-indulgence. You, of course, know how he came to leave the bank at Memphis."

The purpose of Herman Clark was to make effective his insinuations against St. Clair by first speaking in his praise. He was extremely anxious to turn Mrs. Brannan against St. Clair, and, through her, the daughter also.

"I heard through Mr. Triston and Harry Thorne that the banker had been misinformed as to the cause of a certain absence from his post, and had dispensed with his services without affording him a chance for explanation."

"Ah! then I am sorry I reverted to that matter," said Mr. Clark, with a significant expression of surprise on his face. "I should be the last one in the world to say a word to change a favorable impression of a friend of mine." His manner indicated that he could impart information on the subject, but that he was averse to doing so.

"Why, was there any serious fault on the part of Mr. St. Clair?" asked Mrs. Brannan, with natural curiosity.

"No intentional fault; but the banker considered it

quite serious. Mr. St. Clair's own confession caused his dismissal. Your friends were misinformed as to his not having an opportunity to explain; but I am very sorry you asked me a direct question. I could not but answer you truthfully on any subject, however unpleasant to me it might be. Mr. St. Clair is a man of good purposes and intentions, except he——"

Here he paused, as though unwilling to go farther.

"Since I have caused you to answer in part, it would be better for me to hear in full. I respect your feelings; I honor those who refrain from speaking against their acquaintances; but the truth sometimes ought to be told. I prefer to know the truth rather than be left to conjecture."

"Your wishes are commands to me. I will tell the simple facts without comment as to my own opinions. You will remember that, shortly after your arrival in Corinth, a temperance entertainment was given, at which your daughter recited. St. Clair, on invitation of Harry Thorne, attended. Before leaving Memphis he procured a bottle of whiskey, which he stowed under the seat of his buggy, for the purpose (as he stated to a friend) of getting consolation on the return trip, for the infliction he would endure in listening to the temperance fanatics. Apparently, he sought too much consolation. His horse ran away and he was dashed to the ground, where he was found, while still insensible, by his friend, John Gage, who took him to his home near by. He was only stunned and not much hurt. The horse, with a remnant of the buggy, reached Memphis and caused inquiry to be made.

The banker heard in some way of St. Clair's having provided himself with whiskey, probably through the fact of the empty bottle's being found near the place of the accident. Three or four days after, St. Clair having recovered from his bruises, appeared at the bank, and when asked about his conduct, admitted all that had been reported to the banker. He was at once discharged. Now, Mrs. Brannan, I do not criticise his course. Not knowing myself the taste of liquor, I cannot understand the temptation to one who has formed a liking for it, and therefore would not judge him harshly."

Mr. Clark made his statement with hesitation and apparent reluctance. He well knew how one of Mrs. Brannan's ideas of morality would regard the conduct described, and was anxious to impress her with the idea of his directly opposite disposition in regard to intoxicants. In reality, he was a regular and steady drinker, and had imbibed more liquor in a month than St. Clair had in a year, but he did it on the sly.

"Why, if he is so weak in the matter of self-indulgence," said Mrs. Brannan when he ceased speaking, "I am afraid his deficiency in strength of character may involve him in more serious troubles."

"I have reason to believe that it has done so already; but I will save him if possible, and will tell you in the future to what I refer. and the results of my efforts to shield him."

"I am sorry to hear this, but glad you have frankly told me the story," said Mrs. Brannan. She was fully persuaded from the reluctant manner of Clark that

he had imparted the truth. The idea that he regarded St. Clair as a rival and sought to poison her mind against him did not occur to her. She was satisfied that she had learned the true character of St. Clair—a clever and amiable young man, meaning well, but weak and yielding in the face of temptation. Her interest in learning about him was aroused by a suspicion that her daughter was becoming more and more attracted towards him. She now resolved to use all her powers to check the growth of any love sentiments in that direction. She felt that at the present stage it would be an easy task, and was very grateful to Mr. Clark for the information he had given. His adroit and polite attentions, shown in so natural and unassuming a way, greatly flattered her. She was intelligent and not vain, but she was deceived, as the good and wise often are, by the smooth, oily tongue of the false and base-hearted.

Harry Thorne arose to leave, and the two groups mingled together and joined in a general conversation. Soon after his departure, Mrs. Triston and Mrs. Brannan excused themselves, and Katie Gardiner was left alone to entertain Mr. Clark.

“You and mother seem to be very confidential friends,” observed Katie, with a pleasant smile. “I fear I must become jealous of her, if she monopolizes the attention of all the young gentlemen. It is the same way when Harry Thorne or Mr. St. Clair calls. Now I know she is so sweet and lovable that it is not surprising every one prefers her society, but what she

can find of interest in the silly twaddle of you youngsters is the mystery to me."

"You are very complimentary. Accept my grateful acknowledgments. But, jesting aside, I am quite in love with your mother. Do not think I speak words of flattery, when I say that she is one of the most charming women I ever met; excepting her daughter (who ought not to be blamed for being like her), there is no one with whom I prefer to converse."

"That will answer for a peace offering. The highest compliment that can be paid me is to say I resemble her. I fairly idolize her. She is my model, my highest ideal of womanhood. She is my counsellor in all things, and she is always right, so I never think of acting contrary to her judgment. I am glad to see you talking to her, for if she gives you as good advice as she does me, she might make something out of even you, although such a thing is hardly to be expected."

"I agree," he returned, laughing, "that if she failed, it would be a hopeless undertaking. But you say that you follow her counsel in all things. Suppose she did not favor the suit of one to whom you had given your heart's love, what would you do in such a case?"

"Well, there is no such case, nor likely to be, for several reasons. First, I do not propose to love any one. I am set apart for the happiest destiny of woman-kind—an old maid. Second, if I were ever so unfortunate as to fall in love, I am sure mother would favor it; third, if in such a case she did oppose the inclinations of my heart, I should be so certain she had good

reasons for it, that I would change my inclinations; and we should again agree, as we have always done."

"You have greater will power, then, than any one else in the world," he said, looking earnestly into her eyes.

"Why do you say that?"

"Because all others find it impossible to change the inclinations occasioned by love, no matter how many or how good the reasons offered for so doing."

"Oh, that is the way it is taught in novels. I will not consent to have anything come into my heart that will take away my brains. I hope to always have sense enough to see and understand good reasons for giving up what I ought not to have."

"Well, I hope when love enters your heart there will not be any good reasons for giving up the object of it. It is evident you have never loved."

"Your assumption of superior knowledge on the subject suggests that you have."

"I have; I love now, and I am sure that neither mother's tears nor prayers could change my heart's inclinations."

There was a subdued intensity in his tones as he uttered these words; but before she could speak he added: "My creed as to love's constancy is different from yours, now. Wait until you really love, and then tell me whether your heart or your brain, your affections or your reason, will control your actions. Let us now discuss some of your favorite authors. It is always delightful to hear you discourse on literature, and I think we generally agree on such subjects."

He longed to throw himself at her feet and pour out burning words of love, but he knew she was not ready to hear it. He felt he was growing in her favor, and in time expected a return of his passion. His words and manners had shown her the state of his heart, and he reasoned that this would tend to develop a favorable impression towards him.

After he had gone she gave herself up to long and serious thought. It is pleasing to discover that homage is offered. She regarded Mr. Clark as a young man of high moral qualities, and knew him to be intelligent and interesting. The honor of his love was a compliment, and it aroused sober heart questionings. His company was agreeable; his personal appearance was satisfactory—in fact, he was handsome and prepossessing. But did he fill the measure of her heart's ideal? There was something lacking; she knew not what. Somehow, her thoughts turned to St. Clair. He had made no overtures, yet she felt his manner and bearing betokened a truer and more elevated homage than even the intense tones to which she had just listened. Her heart's instincts in some way detected a difference in the two natures; yet the little she had heard and her own observations indicated that Clark was strong and self-reliant, while St. Clair, although frank and generous, was weak and self-indulgent. Her judgment leaned toward Clark; her heart inclined toward St. Clair. Which will she follow?

CHAPTER XV.

ARREST FOR FORGERY.

“Innocence unmov’d
At a false accusation doth the more
Confirm itself; and guilt is best discover’d
By its own fears.”

—*Nabb.*

“He’s poor, and that’s suspicious—he’s unknown,
And that’s defenceless; true we have no proof
Of guilt—but what hath he of innocence?”

—*Byron.*

I COULD not wait for you to come to the office, Mr. Triston,” exclaimed Harry Thorne, as he was ushered early one morning into the sitting room of Judge Triston’s home. “A letter in this morning’s mail from Memphis contains the most astounding information. I cannot understand it. Here is the letter; read it, and tell me what it means.”

Judge Triston took the letter and read aloud as follows:

“Dear Harry,—I came here yesterday, as you know, for the purpose of renewing a note in bank. When I called on Mr. Josiah Carter and asked him to sign a new note in renewal of the one he had heretofore signed, he said he had never endorsed a note for me,

and if there was one in bank with his name to it, it was a forgery. He left me abruptly, and in a short time a warrant was sworn out for my arrest on the charge of forgery. Through the kindness of John Gage, a bondsman was secured, and I have so far avoided being lodged in jail as a common criminal. Mr. Joseph Barnard signed the bail bond. My trial will not occur until the latter part of next month, nearly two months hence. In the meantime, I will remain at my home here, as I am unwilling to meet any of my friends in Corinth until I am cleared of this disgraceful charge. I need not assure you of my innocence. Please ask Judge Triston to take the management of my case, and represent me at the trial.

“Sincerely yours,

HARVEY ST. CLAIR.”

“This is a great surprise to me,” said Judge Triston, as he finished reading the letter. “It is a serious charge.”

“Yes, but it is a false one,” said Thorne. “Harvey St. Clair is no more guilty of forgery than I am. I know he is honorable and incapable of such an act.”

“I have entertained a similar opinion of him,” returned Mr. Triston. Still, if Mr. Carter swears that the signature is not genuine, and St. Clair has no witnesses to establish its genuineness, it will prove a serious case.”

“I am greatly in hopes,” said Mrs. Brannan, who, together with her daughter, was in the room when Harry Thorne entered, “that Mr. St. Clair will be able to prove his innocence, but I fear that in a moment of

weakness he has yielded to temptation. I believe Mr. Thorne overestimates his friend's strength of character."

"I am sure I do not. The sequel will demonstrate that my faith in his integrity is not misplaced. Will you, Judge, attend the trial?"

"Yes; write and express to him my sympathy, and assure him that I will be present and assist in his defense."

During the conversation Katie Gardiner had remained silent. She did not speak lest her inward emotion should betray itself. Why did she feel so disturbed? she asked herself. St. Clair was only an acquaintance. Of course she would be sorry for an acquaintance in trouble, but why this wild tumult of distress surging in her heart? For the first time she realized there was a feeling different from what she felt toward any other.

When Judge Triston and Harry had left the house she turned with an imploring look to her mother.

"Why do you think Mr. St. Clair's character is weak, and that it was possible for him to yield to such a temptation. I believe he is guiltless."

"My daughter, I fear you are mistaken. We do not always know the real character of those who impress us most favorably. I have information that you have not. I will now tell you what caused the opinion I expressed. From certain facts elicited in a conversation with Mr. Clark I was not as surprised at the news as the others were."

"It was very mean in Mr. Clark to speak against a friend," interrupted Katie.

"Do not be hasty, daughter. Let me explain the whole circumstances of my interview with Mr. Clark. What I learned was very reluctantly imparted."

Mrs. Brannan recounted the entire conversation in which Herman Clark had, with such apparent regret and embarrassment, answered her inquiries. How he had spoken in generous praise of St. Clair and revealed the story of the runaway and its evident cause only when she had insisted upon it, as being more just.

Honestly convinced herself that Mr. Clark was honorable in his course, she presented his attitude in such a light as not to reflect upon him as in the least unkind or unfriendly in his treatment of a friend.

Katie's amazement was unbounded as she listened to the recital of St. Clair's self-indulgence and the consequent dismissal from the bank. She saw no way to discredit the story; still she was unwilling to argue therefrom that he was probably guilty of the more serious charge of forgery.

"Even if all this is true," she said, "I still cannot believe it possible that he has stooped to the heinous offense of signing another's name to a note."

"I observed to Mr. Clark that if he was weak and yielding in such things, he might be deficient in strength of character and fail to resist more serious temptations; his reply convinces me now that he had knowledge or suspicions of this very offense."

"What was his reply?"

“He said, ‘I fear he has already done so; but I will save him if possible, and will tell you in future to what I refer and the results of my efforts to shield him.’ ”

“This is a very severe blow to me, mother. It is hard to have an ideal of sincerity and truthfulness shattered. I did not know until now how highly I regarded Mr. St. Clair. I had not realized that love for him was springing up in my heart, but I see now that I was unconsciously clothing him with all the perfections of my ideal. To you alone I make this confession. The ideal is broken. The dream must fade away, and I must banish even the memory of it from my thoughts.”

CHAPTER XVI.

A FRIEND AND AN ENEMY AT WORK.

“Friendship above all ties does bind the heart,
And faith in friendship is the noblest part.”

—*Lord Orrery.*

“The ignoble mind
Loves ever to assail with secret blow
The loftier, purer beings of their kind.”

—*Simms.*

A FEW days after the service rendered his friend, St. Clair, in procuring a bondsman, John Gage departed for Vernon, the home of his affianced. On the day appointed, his marriage to Lena Barnard took place. A fortnight was spent among the relatives and friends of the bride before returning to their future home with Joseph Barnard at Meadow Farm. The father of Lena, during their brief stay at Vernon, became greatly impressed with the sterling character and worth of the one his daughter had chosen for a life companion. His brother's high commendation had prepared him to expect worthy traits in the son-in-law, but his own observation more than confirmed the account given. Being thus favorably inclined toward Gage, he readily took interest in whatever was of concern to the young man. On one occasion he spoke to his father-in-law

about his friend, Harvey St. Clair, and of his anxiety to do something to promote his prosperity. His assertions were positive and emphatic as to the ability, honor and integrity of his friend, yet he feared that the misfortune of his dismissal from the bank at Memphis, and his arrest on the charge of forgery would fatally injure his prospects. He had no doubt of his acquittal, as he knew it was impossible for St. Clair to be guilty of such a crime. Mr. Barnard listened attentively to the story, and the earnest manner of John Gage convinced him that St. Clair must be the victim of untoward circumstances and not unworthy; therefore he expressed a willingness to aid him. He promised Gage, in the event of his friend's exoneration by the court, he would arrange to give him a position in his manufacturing establishment, and it would be such a place as would enable him to advance rapidly, if he possessed the ability claimed for him.

On Gage's return he hastened to acquaint his friend of the fine opening awaiting him at the termination of his trial. St. Clair was deeply moved by the devoted interest taken in his welfare.

"I can never thank you enough," he said. "An opportunity of this kind fills my utmost desire. If I can make a business success, I may then aspire to a realization of my love dream. Yet I fear that this false accusation will ruin all my fond hopes. I may not be able to convince the jury of my innocence. It is reported that Carter and his two sons will testify that the signature is a forgery."

"Do not be discouraged. The right will prevail,

Everything possible will be done by your friends and your lawyers to defeat the old scoundrel, and I am confident they will succeed."

"Well, I will bear up manfully and hope for the best. Mr. Clark came to see me, and kindly expressed his sympathy. He seemed greatly incensed that I should be called upon to answer such a charge. As you know, I did not look upon him as friendly inclined, but his manner has given me a more favorable impression of his attitude towards me. I am relieved of a fear I entertained at first, that he would give testimony as an expert prejudicial to me. He assures me of his warmest interest in my behalf."

"I am glad to hear this," said Gage. "Perhaps we have judged him unkindly and unjustly. I will see him soon and cultivate his friendship more generously than I have done heretofore."

A little while after leaving St. Clair, Gage met Herman Clark and introduced the subject of his friend's trouble.

"It is a most preposterous charge," said Clark. "Any one who knows St. Clair will not believe him capable of committing such a criminal offense. He surely can have no difficulty in establishing his innocence."

"Your testimony may be of great service. You are doubtless familiar with Josiah Carter's signature?"

"No; I have never seen his name on any document except on the St. Clair note. It may be that there are papers in the bank bearing his signature, but, if so, I have not observed them. I will take a look and see

what I can find. I do not question that, when the name as written on St. Clair's note is compared with the signature of Mr. Carter on other papers, a similarity will be shown to prove the genuineness of the one claimed as a forgery. I think there need be no uneasiness about the triumphant acquittal of our friend."

Gage was greatly pleased at the words of Clark. He felt exceedingly kind towards him, and secretly upbraided himself for his former uncharitable thoughts. After a few minutes' further conversation concerning the case of St. Clair, Clark changed the subject by saying:

"I am seeking to discover the whereabouts of a certain person who formerly lived in this county. I have inquired of every one I know except you, and your absence has prevented my asking you before. So far, I have found no one that can tell what has become of him. His name is Alfred Gibson."

"It is fortunate that you did not pass me by. By the merest accident, I can furnish the information you seek. Only a few days ago I saw and talked with Alfred Gibson. While in Vernon I was talking to some gentlemen I met in a store, and, incidentally, mentioned the fact of my living in Henderson County. A man standing near at once approached me and remarked that he had formerly lived in that county. We naturally entered into conversation about the people and scenes of our home locality, in which I learned his name and the fact that he resides in the country only a few miles from Vernon."

Herman Clark was highly elated, but did not display any special interest. He told Gage that an ex-soldier friend had written to him to procure, if possible, the address of Alfred Gibson. Clark now regarded everything as working for the accomplishment of his purpose. He believed that he would soon have St. Clair disgraced, and that the fortune-teller would now be able to bring the long-lost Captain Brannan to light. He reasoned that in the great distress of Mrs. Brannan and her daughter, occasioned thereby, he would pose as their best friend, and that the lovely Katie would not then reject his overtures. He determined to defer telling Stephen Pye of Gibson's address until such time as he was ready for the disclosure as to Brannan to be made.

John Gage also was elated over the interview, but with very different hopes and motives. He was greatly pleased to hear the assurance Clark had given of his purpose to befriend St. Clair. He could not have believed—much less have known—that on the night of that very day Clark had arranged for a secret meeting with Josiah Carter. This meeting was so carefully planned that no one had any knowledge of it.

"It is very important," said Clark when alone in a secluded room with Mr. Carter, "that no mistake be made in the prosecution you have undertaken, or the consequences may prove disastrous to yourself. You know I am your friend; but, in order to serve you best, I must appear to befriend St. Clair. It must never be known that I have had any interview with you. I will be a valuable witness for your side, but my state-

ments must be drawn out by persistent cross-questioning. My first statements will be friendly towards the accused, but, when I have explained fully, you will know what questions to suggest to the prosecuting attorney. I have brought from the bank the note of St. Clair, to which your name is affixed; and I have also brought two petitions—one about a country road, and the other about a district school, which I found among papers at the bank. On both these petitions are the signatures of several of your neighbors. These papers are of no value now. They were prepared several years ago, and no one knows now who did or did not sign them. You can now sign your name to each of them, being careful that the signature is written differently from the one on this note.

“At the trial you can instruct the prosecutor to ask me if your signature appears on any other papers in the bank. My answer will cause these petitions to be produced. I will reluctantly testify, in answer to questions you have propounded, that I saw you sign these petitions, and know that the signature is yours. When they are compared with the writing on the note, great dissimilarity will be shown. Now, sign these two papers so that every letter will be the same in both signatures, and at the same time unlike the writing of your name on the St. Clair note. Practice on this sheet of paper awhile; make a different kind of a capital J and C, and also form the other letters a little differently.”

Mr. Carter took the pen and, following suggestions,

was soon able to write his name in a style quite dissimilar to the way it appeared on the note.

"Now, Mr. Carter, your success depends upon absolute secrecy as to my interviews with you. I have my own reasons for desiring the prosecution to establish its case; and your position demands success; otherwise, you may be prosecuted for perjury. You can see that my friendly relations toward you must never be known."

"I understand fully, Mr. Clark," replied Mr. Carter. "I will depend upon you, and you need have no apprehension of my betraying you. Our purpose and interest are identical, and our confidence is necessarily sacred."

After every minute detail had been discussed and thoroughly understood, the plotters separated. Mr. Clark was now confident that the issue of the trial would remove his rival from his path. He believed that St. Clair would be convicted and sentenced to a term in the penitentiary. He knew that Mrs. Brannan now favored his suit for her daughter's hand, and felt confident that the daughter did not regard him with any special disfavor. He resolved that no time should be lost, and that every opportunity should be utilized to further his cause while the cloud rested on his rival, believing that when the storm of disgrace burst upon St. Clair, his own complete success would be achieved readily.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE ENEMY STILL AT WORK.

“Damn with faint praise, assent with civil leer,
And, without sneering, teach the rest to sneer;
Willing to wound, but yet afraid to strike,
Just hint a fault, and hesitate dislike.”

—*Pope.*

IN pursuance of his resolution to improve every moment and opportunity, Clark soon paid a visit to the residence of Judge Triston. He was received by Mrs. Brannan.

“Your presence is very welcome,” she said, after the visitor was seated in the parlor. “I have been anxious to learn if the unfortunate situation of your friend, St. Clair, arises from what you had in mind when you intimated your purpose to shield him from a more serious weakness than that which caused his dismissal from the bank.”

“I regret extremely that I inadvertently spoke as I did. It pains me to be the medium of any unpleasant revelation, even to you, of one who has been my intimate friend. But I feel that I cannot deny any confidence to you, and will therefore speak frankly. Mr. St. Clair’s trouble is what I feared, and what I hoped to

avert. I still hope that his innocence may be established."

"You do not, then, think that the signature was a forgery?"

"I am at a loss what to believe. It is inconceivable that he would be guilty of so grave an offence, yet Mr. Carter asserts positively that he never signed his name to the note. St. Clair occupies a very serious position, and even if he is not convicted, his good name must necessarily suffer. I am deeply distressed for my friend."

"I appreciate your feelings. I am also greatly pained. I had formed a high opinion of St. Clair, but all this indicates that underneath his naturally amiable and generous nature there lies a vein of weakness."

"Let us hope that the ordeal through which he is passing may correct the evil or weak tendencies, and a strong, self-reliant, manly character be yet evolved." He did not utter these words in a sneering tone, but his expression plainly indicated that he did not believe such a result probable.

"It is charitable to hope in that direction," said Mrs. Brannan with a sigh. "The history of mankind rarely furnishes examples of such changes. If he is guilty of this great crime, the tendency will be downward and not upward. I deeply mourn that my good opinion should be so rudely and forever changed."

"It is sad, indeed; I grieve much for my friend. But, dear Mrs. Brannan, I am not without very deep concern for myself. It is not from any apprehension of arrest or imprisonment. There is something even

more direful to me than that. I love your daughter—madly, passionately. I have not told her so, and will not without your consent. Oh! may I hope for your approval of my suit and your permission to speak to Katie of my love.”

“I am not displeased to hear this, and am disposed to look with favor upon your claims; yet I must beg that you defer a declaration of love, at least until your next visit. Let your conduct and conversation with Katie to-day be just as heretofore. In one week you may return to receive my answer to your prayer for permission to speak to her.”

“Your wishes will be fully respected. It is proper that you should know, although the knowledge will not influence either you or your daughter, that I will have ample means to provide the necessities and even the luxuries of life. By the death of an uncle, which occurred only a few weeks ago in a distant State, I have fallen heir to a considerable fortune. The estate is now being settled up, and very soon I shall come into possession of my inheritance. I do not wish any one to know of this, save yourself, until after I have won the greater fortune of your daughter’s hand.”

At this moment Katie entered the parlor, and Mrs. Brannan, after a few minutes’ general conversation, withdrew. With music, and conversation on books and current topics, an hour or more was agreeably passed by the two, and then Mr. Clark took his departure. In accordance with his promise, he avoided any expression of love, except such as his manner and eyes conveyed. She could not mistake the nature

of his sentiments, and she was led to question her own heart to determine whether she could honestly return his love. She was pleased with his deportment and flattered by the homage of his love. She realized that her heart did not respond warmly, yet was conscious of an increasing interest, and reasoned that time might awaken deeper feelings. The answer she ought to make to a proffer of his hand and heart caused a sense of uneasiness and restraint. His manner was so marked, his admiration and devotion so apparent, that she expected an avowal at any moment. When he departed without having made it, she experienced a feeling of relief. She knew it would not be long delayed, but she would now have time to calmly study her heart.

"My dear daughter," said Mrs. Brannan, when alone with Katie in their room, "I wish to speak very frankly on an important subject. First, did Mr. Clark speak to you of love?"

"Yes, by looks and manner, but not by words."

"I am pleased that no avowal was made. You are aware of his love, because he was unable to hide it. This implies that his passion is deep and strong. It is a serious thing to love. If it is not returned, great pain and sometimes ruin of all life's prospects follows. Yet it is better that pain come to one life than that two lives should be sacrificed. Your happiness is my deepest concern. Mr. Clark told me of his love and asked permission to speak to you. I requested him to defer doing so, as I wished to talk with you. Are you prepared to answer him?"

“No, dear mother, I am not. I greatly respect and even admire him, and might soon experience a warmer feeling. I prize the homage and devotion of such a heart as I feel he possesses and shrink from giving it pain. Perhaps my duty and my own best good lies in the direction of accepting him. I have had faint visions of a different ideal, but they have faded away now.”

“You refer to St. Clair. How sad I am that dreams, however faint, came to your mind in that direction! It is fortunate that the evidence to dispel them came in time. Your life would have been irretrievably ruined had there been a little delay of the recent developments. It is clear now that we have been greatly mistaken about Mr. St. Clair’s character. Disclosures so reluctantly and sadly given convince me beyond doubt that the forgery was committed—not with intention to defraud, but with expectation of making payment before discovery of the act. Conviction is now almost certain, and the open door of the State’s prison stands before him. It is unspeakably sad that one with so many admirable traits should prove devoid of moral strength. You must never permit your thoughts to again revert to him. While your own heart must decide for or against Mr. Clark, I personally esteem him highly and should be glad if you could feel your own happiness can be secured by making him happy. He impresses me as a man possessing strong moral convictions and full of kindly and generous impulses. I feel sure that his love for you is deep and abiding and that his every desire and aim will be to promote your

welfare. Perhaps I ought not to say this, as it may appear like an effort to influence you. Consider only that I favor his pretensions in the event they are acceptable to you."

"I will commune earnestly with my heart, and when he returns I shall be prepared to answer."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE SEARCH RESUMED.

“Attempt the end, and never stand to doubt;
Nothing so hard, but search will find it out.”

Herrick.

CLARK was well satisfied that Mrs. Brannan favored his aspirations for the hand of her daughter. He was by no means so well satisfied with the inclinations of the daughter. His greatest hope, however, was that the mother's preference would have much weight. The time had come to put his hopes to the test. In case of hesitancy or refusal, he must have ready other influences to work in his own behalf. Stephen Pye must now be sent on his mission of discovery. With this thought in view, Clark took his way to the cabin on the cliff. The fortune-teller was anxious to see him, knowing that he had been making diligent inquiry for the address of the ex-soldier Gibson.

“I bring you good news,” said Herman Clark, in answer to the searching look of Mr. Pye.

“Ah! have you learned anything of Gibson? Speak quick. The hope of finding him has been so long deferred that despair has entered my heart.”

“Yes, my friend, I can tell you all you want to know. Alfred Gibson, who was a soldier in Captain Brannan's company, is now living about two hundred miles from

here, near Vernon, in adjoining State. If Captain Brannan is there, he did not go very far away from his deserted home to locate."

"How did you ascertain about Gibson?"

"From Mr. Gage, who has recently returned from Vernon, where he went to wed a Miss Barnard. By the way, you will remember that this young lady had her fortune told by you on the night I first saw you. By some strange accident you described Mr. Gage as the one she was in love with. Soon after that they became engaged, and Miss Barnard returned to her home in Vernon to make preparations for the marriage, which occurred a few weeks ago. They are now living with Joseph Barnard at Meadow Lawn."

"Yes, I recollect the circumstances, and I am glad if any haphazard words of mine contributed toward a happy union."

Stephen Pye also remembered that Mr. Gage was secreted with St. Clair in his cabin on the night referred to, but having promised never to reveal that fact, he kept his word faithfully.

"Your haphazard words also served to accomplish your own desires. Except for what occurred then Mr. Gage would never have aspired to the hand of the fair heiress, and consequently would not have visited Vernon to bring back word of Gibson."

"Little did I imagine that such strange consequences would arise from the incidents of that evening. Perhaps stranger things yet are to be developed therefrom." He was thinking of the fortune he had told for St. Clair's sake, and which Clark had appropriated to

himself. Clark was thinking, too, of the influences of that night on his own affairs.

"Well, what course will you now pursue?"

"In a few hours I shall be on my way to Vernon. I shall vanish from here as suddenly as I appeared, and you alone will know when or to what point I have departed."

"In return for the aid I have been to you, I ask that when you with certainty locate Captain Brannan, you communicate with me before making public exposure."

"Impatient as I shall be to denounce and punish the villian, I agree to do as you request. I owe you much, and if by a little patience I can repay it I will do so."

"One thing more: Your consuming desire is to punish the destroyer of your home. Your purpose is to wreak dire vengeance by taking his life. Have you considered that such a course is very unwise? You have been forced to wait weary years for an opportunity of vengeance; do not accomplish it in a moment. Let Brannan live and see that he is brought back to Fremont, his old home, to face public disgrace among his neighbors and friends; then your revenge will be sweet and lasting. If you strike him down, he then knows nothing more, and you will only have the satisfaction of contemplating your act, behind prison bars, while awaiting your trial as a murderer. In such a case he would have the best of it, and your situation would be most miserable. Promise me that you will make no attempt on his life, but, instead, pursue the course I suggest."

"How can I resist the impulse to lay violent hands on the fiend as soon as I see him?"

"By seeing how much sweeter revenge you can have by seeing him face the scorn and loathing of those who were his friends and associates. Promise what I ask, or I will warn Gibson of your purpose, and he will warn the one you seek and thus prevent your gaining any vengeance at all."

"Then I will promise to avoid violence. I never break my word, so you can rest satisfied that I will not depart from the course you have suggested."

Immediately after the departure of Clark, the fortune-teller began packing in a large chest all the paraphernalia of his profession. On completing his work he procured a team and started with the chest to the nearest station. The rude chairs and tables he left in the cabin. Within three hours after his conversation with Herman Clark he was on his way to Vernon. Arriving there, he secured lodgings, but a sudden attack of his old rheumatic trouble confined him to his room for several weeks. More than two months elapsed before he was able to visit Alfred Gibson. Following the directions he had received, he proceeded to Tunnel Hill, distant about ten miles from Vernon. He found that the object of his search was a physician, running a small drug store. Stephen Pye entered the store, and while purchasing some cigars opened a conversation by asking the proprietor if he was not an ex-soldier.

As both had served in the Union army, they soon became interested in relating to each other remi-

niscences of soldier-life. It was not long before Dr. Gibson (as he was here called) mentioned the name of the captain of his company.

"Why, I met Captain Brannan at Knoxville during the war," said Stephen Pye. "He must be the same. Do you know what became of him?"

"No; I thought I recognized him one day in Vernon, but on inquiring was told that the person was Judge Brown. Several times I have passed this judge on the streets, and been struck with his remarkable resemblance to my old captain. So I call him Captain Brannan's double."

"You think, then, that he is not Captain Brannan under an assumed name?"

"I can imagine no good reason for such a course. Judge Brown is very popular and stands high in the community. Besides, he is a temperance fanatic, and Captain Brannan, when I knew him, was very much inclined to intemperance."

"Sometimes that kind of people become the strongest temperance advocates. Perhaps he became disgusted with his habits and changed them and his name at the same time."

"I scarcely think such can be the case; but he is surely President Brannan's double. I will soon have opportunity for a close inspection of him, as I have to stand trial week after next in his court for selling liquor. The law in this county is very strict against the sale of ardent spirits. In order to make a living, I have been secretly supplying whiskey to customers. I think I will plead guilty to the charge, as I know the

case can be proven against me. I hope, by admitting the offense and promising not to violate the law again, that I may get off with a small fine."

"Doubtless that will be the best plan to pursue. Tell me the day and hour your trial is set for, and I will be there. I have some curiosity to see the Judge whom you call Brannan's double. I knew Brannan so well that I may be able to tell if you are correct in representing such great resemblance. I shall stay in Vernon for a few weeks. My business is with the farmers, and I may have occasion to pass this way again soon; if so, I will call, as I like to chat with old soldiers."

"Very glad to see you any time you travel this way, and I will look for you at ten o'clock, a week from next Thursday, in Judge Brown's court. I am anxious to have some one else who knew Brannan see this Judge Brown. Recently I wrote to Dr. Horn, of my old regiment, asking if he knew what had become of my old captain, and told him of Brown's resemblance. I have not received a reply. Be sure and come to my trial. Maybe you can find some way to influence Pres. Brannan's double to be lenient towards me."

"I am powerless with the 'double,' but if it should be Brannan himself, I am sure I could help you. I will not fail to attend the court at the time named."

Stephen Pye retraced his way to Vernon. He had learned all he desired for the present. He knew where to look, and would soon satisfy himself as to the identity. He saw that Gibson had now come to believe

that Judge Brown was not Pres. Brannan. At first he had thought they were the same, and so told the comrade he met at the soldiers' reunion; but, after seeing the popularity and prominence of Judge Brown, had concluded that it was only a case of marked resemblance. Stephen Pye, knowing there were reasons for Brannan's assuming another name, felt confident that the Captain and the Judge were one and the same. He did not wish to take Gibson into his confidence. If Judge Brown had the birthmark on his left wrist, it would afford all the identification needed.

We will now leave Stephen Pye to pursue his investigation, the results of which will in due time appear, while we return to our friends at Corinth.

CHAPTER XIX.

MENTAL TELEGRAPHY.

“Things are what they appear to be ; or they neither are, nor appear to be ; or they are, and do not appear to be ; or they are not, and yet appear to be.”

—*Epictetus*.

IN the pleasant home of Judge Triston, one evening in the early spring (and, by the way, on the very day that Stephen Pye had left the cabin for Vernon), Mrs. Brannan was seated alone in the library, musing over the past. It was now nearly seven years since she saw her husband for the last time. Her thoughts were sad. Time mellows the grief borne for those who are taken from us by death. While we do not forget the dead, the sorrow passes away after years have elapsed ; but when a dear one has mysteriously disappeared, and we can only conjecture as to when, how, or where death has occurred, it is much harder to cease grieving. As she was mournfully thinking of the unknown fate by which she was separated from her husband, Judge Triston entered the room.

“Mrs. Brannan,” he said, “I have to-day received a letter from the representative of the insurance company, concerning your claim under the policy on your

husband's life, and I am glad to inform you that all difficulty is removed. A suit will not be necessary. The company is willing to pay the insurance on demand, after the expiration of seven years. As I have mentioned to you before, the law as interpreted by the Supreme Court presumes, if no trace is found of the missing one within seven years, that he is dead. It is only a very short time now until the seven years shall have elapsed."

"Sometimes the question arises in my mind, what if, after all, my husband should be alive? If I thought he was still living, and yet believed the fact would never be disclosed, I would not receive this insurance money. Lately, more than formerly, I have had a strange feeling of dread oppress me. Do you believe in presentiments?"

"Yes; I am fully convinced that there is a spiritual telegraphy between persons even when at great distances apart."

"Are you a believer in spiritualism?"

"Emphatically, no. It is a baleful belief. It has done great harm, and in no instances proved beneficial. I believe that the spirits or souls of the living, not of the dead, sometimes exert an influence over us when the bodies are widely separated. I do not at all understand how this can be true, but I am sure that our spirits, in rare instances at least, do in some mysterious way and through some unknown channel impress the consciousness of those not bodily present."

"Can you explain what you mean? I do not grasp your thought at all."

“I can, by giving two instances in my own personal experience; but I promise no explanation to account for the medium of communication. I do not in the least understand the processes or powers by which the revelations were made. The first instance to which I will refer occurred a number of years ago, but is as distinct in every detail as if it had occurred but yesterday. I had been married but a short time, and was residing at a distance of half a mile from the home of my father and mother. Late one evening I left father’s house feeling that he was in unusual good health. That night some two hours after midnight, I was aroused from slumber by hearing the voice of my father calling my name, ‘William, William.’ It was in intense whispering accents of distress. I recognized my father’s voice with absolute distinctness. In an instant I was wide awake. Whether I had been awake or dozing just before, I cannot tell. Arousing my wife, I told her that I was certain my father was in some great trouble or distress—probably ill or dying. She reminded me that I had left him late in the evening in perfect health, and tried to persuade me that I had simply been dreaming. I was certain, however, that the spirit of my father had in some manner overcome space and spoken to me as if in my presence. I could not rest, so I arose and began to dress, my wife all the time arguing with me that the impression I had received could not be real. I, however, continued putting on my clothes, and just as I had finished the door bell rang. ‘There!’ I exclaimed to my wife; ‘I am sure now of some message from father.’

Hastening to the door, I was informed by a messenger that my father was dying. With great haste, I hurried to his home, and found him in a most critical condition. His first words were, 'William, William! How my soul has cried out to see you, lest I should die without again looking into your face.' It was no more his voice now that spoke to me than was the voice I had heard in my room nearly an hour before. The physician, who had been sent for, arrived only a few minutes after I reached the bedside. Together we worked until morning with the sorely-stricken patient. Happily, the remedies applied proved efficacious. He recovered and lived many years afterward.

"Now, I have no theory or explanation to offer. I only know that father's soul or spirit spoke to mine, some time before the message conveyed by a human body reached my house."

"Surely, a most startling experience, and one calculated to impress you deeply with the idea that some medium of mental telegraphing does exist. The fact that you conversed with your wife for several minutes about the matter before the arrival of the messenger makes it evident that it was not a mere dream-fancy caused by the sudden awakening at such an hour, with so startling a summons."

"There was no fancy or delusion about it. All occurred precisely as I have stated. Now, for the other experience: Some years ago the pulpit in our church here became vacant, and I was selected by the other officers of the church to invite such ministers as I thought best to come and preach for us, with a view

of their being called to the pastorate. It so happened that about that time I met an old schoolmate, Henry Blackman, and in talking over our schoolboy days, and the mutual friends we had in our early teens, we came to speak of a particular chum, Jim Colyar, as we always called him. You now know him as the Rev. James Colyar, D. D., our pastor. I was surprised to learn from Mr. Blackman that Colyar had entered the ministry. As our paths in life had separated when we were boys, I had not seen or heard of him for nearly seventeen years. For about two weeks Colyar was constantly in my mind. I was debating whether I should invite him to come from a distant State to preach for us. I did not know that he would even entertain the thought of making a change; nor did I know what kind of a preacher he was. I was naturally anxious, if my boyhood friend came, that he should please the people. So, day after day debating the matter, my thoughts were largely centered upon Colyar, who had not previously been in my mind for many years. Until Mr. Blackman told me of him, I did not know that he was even living. At length, I wrote, urging him to pay me a visit for a few weeks, and to preach for us while here, whether he desired or thought of a change of location or not. Now, as to the rest of my story, you can get Dr. Colyar and his wife to verify it. They have told me that the receipt of my letter produced a profound impression for the reason that for the two weeks before that they had been frequently speaking of me, and wondering whether I was alive or dead. Dr. Colyar

says that, though he had not thought of me for quite a number of years, his mind had constantly reverted to me for several days prior to the arrival of my letter, and that he had determined to trace me up if he possibly could. Now, I know that you will believe my word and Dr. Colyar's. How can you account for the fact that when my thoughts turned to Colyar, his turned to me, although neither had thought of the other for nearly twenty years—did not even have knowledge of each other's existence. Can it be accounted for on any other hypothesis than that the spirit of one person has power to impress itself upon the spirit of another, even when widely separated by space."

"I cannot answer your question. The idea you have suggested is entirely new to me. Such a possibility never occurred to my mind; and I am inclined now to hope there is no truth in your theory."

"Why?" asked Judge Triston.

"Because recently I have vaguely felt affected by the personal presence of Mr. Brannan. I have assumed that these sensations are chargeable to a morbid state of mind; but if your belief in soul telegraphy is correct, I may be drawing near to some dread personal experience of my own."

"You need not have any uneasiness, I think. Such experiences are rare. A thing may happen under certain conditions and circumstances, and yet not be the general rule. My theory may be true, and still not be exemplified except in very extraordinary instances. The spirit or soul of a person may not be

able to strongly impress the spirit or soul of another with whom they are intimately and constantly associated. In such a case it would be impossible to impress at a distance. It is only where the elements of soul affinity exist, whether friendly or unfriendly, that it would be possible for communication of any kind to occur. I do not believe in the universal power of mental telegraphy, but only that it exists in certain conditions of subtle relationship, or affinity in the spiritual organism of those between whom it manifests itself."

CHAPTER XX.

THE HARD HEART SOFTENED.

“Stronger by weakness, wiser men become
As they draw near to their eternal home:
Leaving the old, both worlds at once they view
That stand upon the threshold of the new.”

— *Waller.*

HERMAN CLARK at the time of his visit to Philadelphia had remained there but two days. On his return to Memphis he related many fictitious stories of his experiences in the West, in order to cover up the truth of his having gone in the opposite direction. During his stay in Philadelphia every minute was occupied in furthering the mission upon which he had come. With the aid of the detective, he procured an interview with the servant and trusted attendant of Jared Gardiner. He soon, by means of discreet conversation and by generous bribery, won the confidence of the servant, and through him learned the mind of Mr. Gardiner with reference to his discarded niece. Long and painful illness had softened the bitterness of the past. The harsh and vengeful spirit had been broken. The servant told Mr. Clark that during the last year his master had, by letters and by advertisement, sought to come into communication with the widow and daughter of his brother; but no answer

had come to the advertisements, and the letters had all been returned unclaimed. Clark well understood why the efforts had failed. The deep affliction that had come upon Mrs. Brannan led her into a strict seclusion from her neighbors, and when she departed for the home of Judge Triston, none of them had been informed of her destination. All letters directed to her former home had been returned. But for the severe illness, Mr. Gardiner would have made a journey to trace his relatives, so great was his present desire for reconciliation. Having gained a clear insight into the feelings of Mr. Gardiner regarding his relatives, Clark made bold to call and ask for an interview. It will be remembered that the returned letter which Katie had written to her uncle after her singular dream had been given to Clark to read. At the time, having an object in retaining it, he requested permission to defer reading it, on the ground of not interrupting their conversation. With this letter, and his discreet and frank statement of his intimate acquaintance with Mrs. Brannan and her daughter, he at once gained the full confidence of Mr. Gardiner. In the course of more than an hour's conversation he learned that the cousin who had been adopted as an heir had died, and that Mr. Gardiner's intention (now that he had heard from his niece) was to make her his sole heir and legatee. He expected to live but a very short time, and he would that very day have his lawyer draw up the legal documents in due form. Being too unwell to write a letter, he sent warm and loving messages to his niece and her mother, with many expres-

sions of regret for the obstinacy and hardness of feeling exhibited in the past. His most urgent message was that they should at once come to see him, and gave full particulars how Mr. Clark's bank should draw on him for any amount needed for the journey and in preparation for it. The strictest compliance with all his wishes was promised.

Herman Clark had no intention, however, of giving any information to Mrs. Brannan or her daughter of the existence even of Jared Gardiner, until he had accomplished his determination of securing the hand of the fair heiress. Immediately on his return home he wrote a long letter to Mr. Gardiner, telling him that his niece had been stricken down with typhoid fever, that her almost distracted mother was constantly at her bedside, and that, of course, he could not expect for the present any response to his kind messages; that the writer would keep him advised of the condition of his niece, etc., etc., etc. Clark calculated from his own observation that Mr. Gardiner would not live many days, and felt safe in taking this course. While at brief intervals sending messages of the unconscious condition of Miss Gardiner, he was losing no time from the society of the young lady, and by every suggestion and plea possible was urging her to consent to an early marriage. He had the rare cunning to plead in such a manner as not to appear obtrusive, or at all offensive. At each visit he gradually gained advancement toward the object in view. Mrs. Brannan was a ready ally, not intentionally, but being persuaded in her own mind that Mr. Clark would prove

to be all that her daughter could desire as a life companion, she in many ways smoothed the way for Katie's acquiescence in the wishes of her importunate lover. At length, Katie, with some reluctance, yet with no forebodings, consented to fix the date of her marriage to Herman Clark. She had grown to regard him with increasing favor, and experiencing pleasure and satisfaction in his company, she reasoned that her happiness, as well as his, would be attained by the consummation of the pledge already given. It so happened that the date selected was the very day on which the seven years from the disappearance of Captain Brannan would elapse.

Now that the date of his nuptials was fixed, Clark had no uneasiness in reference to St. Clair as a suitor. Whether convicted or not, he was no longer in his way. The serious matter now demanding attention was the inheritance of the promised bride.

Apprehensive of hearing any day of the death of Jared Gardiner, and of steps being taken by his lawyer to communicate directly with the heir, he hastened to prepare and have in readiness a forged power of attorney, to which the name of Katie Gardiner was signed, and duly acknowledged as her act and deed before Josiah Carter, Magistrate. The promise of a liberal division of the fortune had readily induced Mr. Carter (who had formerly been a magistrate) to assist in the preparation and execution of the document. This had all been done soon after his return from Philadelphia, the date being left blank—to be inserted when news of Mr. Gardiner's death should come. At

the time he was by no means certain that he would succeed in winning the hand of Katie Gardiner, and determined at all hazards to at least secure her fortune. The power of attorney nominated and appointed him as true and lawful agent, and attorney in fact, and gave him full power and authority to use and sign her name to any and all papers, and the same to be as binding as if done by her in her own proper person. To all appearances it was duly signed and acknowledged to be her free act and deed.

CHAPTER XXI.

TRIAL OF ST. CLAIR.

“He’s armed without, that’s innocent within.”

—*Pope.*

THE second day after the departure of Stephen Pye was the day set for the trial of Harvey St. Clair on the charge of forgery. The courthouse at Memphis was crowded. Judge Triston was on hand as counsel for the accused. His old schoolmate and friend, Major Henry Blackman, a celebrated criminal lawyer of C——, who in his boyhood had known the family of St. Clair, having volunteered to assist in the defence, was present when the case was called.

After all the preliminary steps had been taken in introducing the case, Mr. Josiah Carter was placed on the stand by the prosecution. He testified positively and emphatically that he had never signed any note for Harvey St. Clair, and that his name affixed to the note in question (which was shown to him) was a forgery. The cross-questioning of the defence in no way changed the positiveness of his statements that the signature on the note was not made by him.

The next witness was James Carter, a son of Josiah Carter, who testified that he was present at the time the accused claimed the signature was made, and that

he was positive that his father had not attached his name to the note; that he was familiar with his father's handwriting, and that the name as written on the note in court was not his father's signature. The defence was unable in any way to alter the character of the statements made by this witness.

Mr. Herman Clark was placed upon the witness stand.

"Are you acquainted with the accused, Mr. St. Clair?" asked the prosecuting attorney.

"Yes, sir; I have known him quite intimately for several years, and have always regarded him as an exemplary young man."

"Never mind your opinion of his character," sternly ejaculated the attorney. "What is your occupation?"

"I am teller in the bank."

"Have you such experience as to enable you to tell the genuineness of a signature with which you are familiar?"

"Yes, sir; I do not think that I could easily be deceived in a signature that I had once examined."

"Please look at this note. As a bank official, you are doubtless familiar with the signature of Josiah Carter. Is the signature on the note genuine or not?"

"I should judge it to be genuine, because I cannot conceive that Mr. St. Clair could possibly be a party to a fraud of any kind whatever; but I am not familiar with Mr. Carter's signature."

"Have you never seen him sign his name to any paper?"

"Yes; I remember that I witnessed his signature to

two petitions about a roadway in the county, but it was some time ago, and I have no recollection now as to how his name was written."

"Are you positive that you saw Mr. Carter sign those petitions?"

"Yes, I attested his and other signatures on the papers referred to."

"Can you produce the petitions you speak of?"

"Yes; I know where they are in the bank, and if I desired I can step across the street and get them in a moment. I had not thought of this before, but I feel assured that the signatures on these petitions will correspond with the one on the note." The witness knew he had no right to make this comment, but for effect uttered it rapidly before the attorney could stop him. He was excused and in a few minutes returned to the stand with two papers in his hand. These were shown to the attorneys for the defense.

"Now, Mr. Clark," said the prosecuting attorney, "point out to the jury the signatures of Mr. Carter on these two petitions."

The witness did so.

"Did you see Mr. Carter sign both of these papers?"

"I did."

"Are the signatures similar?"

"Precisely alike. I would know at a glance that whoever signed one also signed the other."

"Now, compare these signatures with the one affixed to the note. Did the same person sign the three papers?"

The witness laid the note by the side of the other

papers and looked from one to the other. His face flushed, and apparently making an effort to speak, he stammered and hesitated.

"Speak out," said the prosecuting attorney. "Tell the jury whether the signature on the note is similar to the ones on the petition."

"There—there is no similarity at all," stammeringly answered the witness.

"You are certain that you saw Mr. Carter sign his name to the two petitions?"

"Yes."

"Could the signature on the note have been made by the same person who signed these petitions?"

The witness remained silent, exhibiting a great deal of nervousness.

"Answer," said the lawyer.

"The writing is so entirely different," replied the witness slowly and, seemingly, with great reluctance, "that I cannot see how it would be possible for the same person to make the signatures on petition and note."

The three papers were passed to the jury, and each one showed by the expression of his face that he noted the dissimilarity in the signatures.

The prosecuting attorney at the opening of the case had told the jury that the theory of the prosecution was that the accused, while associated with the bank, had committed the crime charged without intending that it should ever be known, expecting to take up the note at maturity. But losing his position, through self-

indulgence, he was unable to meet the obligation, and thus the forgery was made manifest.

At the conclusion of Herman Clark's testimony the prosecution rested its case.

Judge Triston introduced John Gage, Joseph Barnard and several other friends of St. Clair to prove his good character. They all testified strongly as to his former reputation for honesty and uprightness of life, but had no knowledge whatever bearing upon the signature to the note. During the progress of the trial Major Blackman, the famous criminal lawyer, who had so generously volunteered to come from a distance to defend the son of his boyhood friend, watched closely every incident of the trial. He took no part, except to suggest to Judge Triston from time to time some objection to be made or question to be asked. As the last witness for the defense was dismissed, he leaned over to Judge Triston, and in an undertone asked:

"Who is that young man now leaning on the window sill in the rear of the room?"

"That is Robert Carter, son of Josiah Carter, the prosecuting witness in this case," replied Judge Triston, after locating the one referred to.

"I have been watching him for some time. He seems a little nervous and excited, and has been showing restlessness by moving from one place to another in the room. If he is the son of Josiah Carter, I am going to call him to the witness stand."

"Why, that would be ruinous—he will of course corroborate the testimony of his father and brother; our case is bad enough now."

"Yes, it is so bad that the penitentiary door is standing wide open for our client, and I don't see that anything could make it worse. I will take all the responsibility of this step." Arising, he addressed the court:

"May it please your Honor, we desire to place Robert Carter on the witness stand."

There was a buzz of surprise through the courtroom as the young man, pale and trembling, was led to the witness box by the sheriff. When he was sworn, Major Blackman arose facing the witness and began the examination. His keen, dark eyes flashing into the young man's face, and forefinger pointing toward him to attract attention; he spoke in the impressive tones of a penetrating yet melodious voice.

"What is your name?"

"Robert Carter."

"Are you the son of Josiah Carter and younger brother of James Carter, who have testified in this case?"

"Yes, sir."

"You understand the full solemnity of an oath, do you not?"

"Yes." The witness answered each question in a low voice, with downcast eyes. At this point he furtively glanced around the courtroom.

"Look at me, sir," exclaimed the lawyer, being apprehensive that if the witness caught the eye of his father some signal might be given to affect his statements. "Keep your eyes, young man, upon mine for a few minutes while I ask you a few questions. There, that is right. As I look into your young, innocent eyes

I am sure you do understand the awful responsibility of an oath, and that you will answer truthfully. Now, sir, is it not true that one day last fall your father, your brother and you were out in one of your father's fields loading corn into a wagon, and that the prisoner, Mr. St. Clair, came into the field where you were?"

"Yes, sir."

"On that occasion did you not see Mr. St. Clair take from his pocket a piece of paper about this size," the lawyer here held up a promissory note, "and hand it to your father?"

The witness nodded his head in assent, but seemed too nervous to speak. The quick eye of the lawyer saw that the jury had noted his affirmative answer, and continued his questions rapidly.

"You also remember, do you not, seeing your father take from his pocket a yellow-backed memorandum book, rest it on his knee and place on it the paper Mr. St. Clair had handed to him, and then, taking from Mr. St. Clair a fountain pen, affix his signature to the paper? Did you not see that done?"

"Yes," faintly answered the witness.

"Now, you were summoned as a witness for the prosecution in this case, but were not called to the stand. Is it not a fact that you and your father have had a serious quarrel about this case?"

"We have had some words about it."

"Now, then, is it not true that your father has insisted upon your coming and swearing to what you knew was false, and that you refused, and that that has been the cause of a quarrel between you?"

"Yes, sir."

"You told him, did you not, that if you were put under oath you would tell the truth, and that is the reason you were not asked to testify for the prosecution, is it not?"

"I told him I would not swear to a lie, and I have not done so."

"Have you any doubts about your father's having signed the St. Clair note?"

"None."

"May it please your Honor," said Major Blackman, turning to the Judge, and for the first time removing his eyes from those of the witness, "we are done. A single word of comment is unnecessary to secure the honorable acquittal of the accused."

The jury without leaving their seats rendered a verdict of not guilty. On its announcement, a very distinguished looking personage, who had entered the court-room just as Robert Carter had been called to the stand, and who had been an attentive listener, approached Major Blackman, and, clapping him on the shoulder, exclaimed:

"Major, that was the finest coup-d'état I ever saw in a court-room."

"Why, Senator, you here?"

"Yes; I had business in town, and happened to enter the court-room just in time to witness your master stroke."

The one who paid this high compliment to his famous lawyer friend was then a distinguished member of the upper house of Congress, and afterwards a candidate for Vice-President of the United States.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE RAGING TADS.

“O, what men dare do ! what men may do !
What men daily do, not knowing what they do !”
—*Shakespeare.*

JOHN GAGE and Harry Thorne, who had been present throughout the trial, were overjoyed at the result. Both threw their arms around St. Clair in the ecstasy of their happiness over the complete vindication of their friend's honor. Josiah Carter and his son James slipped quietly out of the court-room, as the jury announced the verdict, and, mounting their horses, left town without a moment's delay.

The indignation of all present was very great against them, and had they remained in sight they would have been subjected to indignity, and perhaps violence, from the hands of St. Clair's friends.

“I have always been opposed to lynching,” exclaimed Harry Thorne, when he and John Gage were seated in St. Clair's room after leaving the courthouse; “but here is an exceptional case. Nothing short of tar and feathers will satisfy my ideas of justice.”

“The conduct of Carter is infamous, and there can be no punishment too severe,” replied John Gage. “I

am impressed with the thought, however, that he is not the worst one engaged in this outrageous affair. I am slow to judge evil of any one without proof, but, if I am not greatly mistaken, another suggested and planned this whole effort to disgrace and injure our friend."

"Do you refer to Herman Clark?" asked Thorne.

"Yes; I watched him closely when on the stand, and cannot longer be deceived by his hypocritical pretense of friendship for St. Clair. I now believe that he induced Carter to make the charge, and that they arranged to have the signatures on the petitions different from the one on the note. I reach this conclusion because I know that the signature on the note is genuine, and therefore entirely different signatures on the petitions cannot be genuine. They were constructed since your arrest, purposely to deceive, whether made by the hand of Mr. Carter or some one else. Such, at least, is my conviction."

"Your theory is plausible," said St. Clair; "but we have no proof. If there was a conspiracy between Clark and Carter, they will not incriminate each other, and we shall always be left to our conjectures. The cupidity of the one, or the malice of the other, whichever it was, has failed of its object. I am happy in being honorably acquitted, and have no time to spend in seeking revenge. I have been idle too long; and, as you informed me to-day that your father-in-law had written for me to come at once, if acquitted, to take the position your kindness secured for me, I intend to start for Vernon in the morning."

"Will you not come to Corinth to see your friends before leaving?" asked Harry Thorne.

"No; I shall not have time."

How gladly he would have taken the time, if he had not known of the engagement of Herman Clark and Katie Gardiner! He had only a short time before learned that the day for their marriage had been fixed. It was a severe blow. His last meeting with Miss Gardiner, which had been more than a month previous, was a pleasant one; and, although no word of a tender nature had ever passed between them, he then had hopes that in time he should win a response to his great but secret love for her. He remained resolute in his purpose not to visit any of his friends in Corinth while under indictment, and, now that he was free and his name untarnished, he had no desire to go; but rather a longing to get as far away as possible, and the sooner the better. Gage knew of his bitter disappointment, and Thorne had some impressions of his feelings toward his fair friend. Both were deeply pained at what had occurred. Even should they have had no interest in St. Clair, they felt that the successful suitor was unworthy of the honor he was receiving.

When, at length, St. Clair parted from his friends, in order to get ready for his journey on the morrow, Thorne and Gage remained together and resumed the discussion of Herman Clark's probable connection with the effort to ruin Harvey St. Clair.

"If Clark's real character could be revealed, it would serve a good purpose to the community, as well as save your friend, Miss Gardiner, from a cruel fate;

but I know of no means to accomplish such an end," remarked Gage.

"I tell you, Gage—why not resort to desperate means? Suppose we organize a secret vigilance committee and arrange a plan to call Josiah Carter out of his house some dark night, overpower him, take him to some secluded spot, and force a confession from him. He deserves a coat of tar and feathers, but we need not proceed beyond a little rough handling and the fright it would give him. If we pretended to string him up on a limb unless he told the exact truth, he would be sure to tell whether any one acted with him in the matter of St. Clair's arrest; and if he did tell the truth we should be able in some way to verify it for use."

"I am greatly opposed to unlawful means of obtaining information," said Gage, very seriously.

"So am I; but under extraordinary circumstances I may go beyond what my judgment approves. I don't pretend to justify such proceedings, but the fact is, I never shall rest satisfied until I see that old scoundrel Carter, at least, scared half to death for what he has done, though nothing more is accomplished.

"Now, I propose that to-morrow night you bring James St. Clair with you to the old log cabin on the cliff, and I will bring there four or five friends whom I can trust to enter heartily into any scheme I suggest. We need not now tell them of any special object in view. At our first meeting we can organize into a secret society, with signs and grips, and arrange for such a character of initiation into our mystic

circle as will afford a world of fun; and when the proper time comes we will find some way of giving old Carter an initiation he will never forget."

After Thorne had explained fully what he had in mind as to the society to be formed, Gage consented to invite James St. Clair to accompany him to the log cabin on the following night.

All the next day Harry Thorne was busy at work drafting a ceremony of initiation for his proposed society. He had a bright and fertile mind, and in course of the day prepared a unique and startling ritual, calculated to afford royal fun to the initiated at the expense of those seeking admission. He sent for a few of his most intimate associates, who readily fell into the spirit of his project.

That night a jolly company, seven in number, was gathered in the old log cabin on the cliff. Blankets were hung over the windows, and seven lanterns (each having brought one) were placed around the wall, affording ample light. Harry Thorne presented his previously arranged plan of organization and ritual of initiation, which, with some changes and additions, were adopted. The selection of a name for their mysterious society caused a lengthy discussion, but they finally settled upon the euphonious title of "The Raging Tads." Harry Thorne was unanimously chosen as King of the Tads, James St. Clair as Vice-King, Frank Burton as Past King. The positions of Chaplain, Secretary, Guide and Sentinel were filled by the other four present. The seven constituted the charter members, and all others who sought admis-

sion must undergo the rigid initiation adopted before enjoying the exalted honor of being a "Raging Tad." Committees were appointed to procure all the paraphernalia needed. They then adjourned until Thursday night of the next week. At the second meeting several initiations occurred, and a night of rare fun was enjoyed by the originators of the new and wonderful order. Soon wild reports were in circulation about the "Raging Tads," but their place of meeting could not be discovered. The members were quietly circulating rumors that they claimed to have heard about the weird orgies at the meetings of the Tads. Each of them professed a desire to find out about the mysterious order, and would tell on all propitious occasions some strange and wonderful story that they had heard. The news rapidly spread, till it became the common talk among town and country boys in and around Corinth and Memphis. Frequent meetings were held, but the greatest secrecy was observed, and the public knew nothing beyond the flying rumors. Occasionally there would be a placard posted upon the door or dwelling of some worthless vagabond, bearing the words, "Beware of the Raging Tads." Emphasis was added to these warnings by the fact that a good-for-nothing drunken wretch, who had cruelly whipped his wife, had been taken by the Tads, and ducked in the river until he was almost drowned.

According to rumor, the Tads numbered more than a hundred. The evil-doers were trembling in fear of a visitation, and the good citizens were alarmed at the existence of a lawless spirit in their midst. The real

membership was less than twenty, and the additions to the original seven had been cautiously selected. Harry Thorne and his companions knew who could be trusted, and they did not intend that any real mischief should be done. They had an object, and were working to it all the time, but as yet only three besides Harry Thorne knew of any intention to bring Josiah Carter within the power of the Raging Tads.

CHAPTER XXIII.

TRAGIC SCENE IN COURT.

“Fate is above us all !

We struggle, but what matters our endeavor?

Our doom is gone beyond our own recall.

May we deny or mitigate it? never.”

—*Miss Landon.*

HARVEY ST. CLAIR had now been in his new position at Vernon nearly three months, and was giving satisfaction beyond any expectations of his employer, notwithstanding the sanguine hopes which had been aroused by John Gage's encomiums of his friend.

Mr. Barnard had taken St. Clair to his own home, and his situation was in every way calculated to give him happiness; but happiness had fled from his life. Ah! who can tell of the blight that comes to the inner life of one who loves with every fibre of his being, and realizes that the object of that love can never more have part or place in his existence! Outwardly, he was brave, applying every energy of body and mind to the duties of his position. His only hope was that constant occupation, and Time, the great consoler, would in course of years deaden the gnawing pain at his heart. About six weeks after his arrival, he was greatly surprised one day on going home to find that

John Gage and his wife, accompanied by Rose German, had just arrived on a visit. Mrs. Gage had become greatly attached to Rose, was always delighted to have her a guest at Meadow Farm, and had prevailed upon her to make a visit to her father's home. St. Clair was glad to see them; they were his truest and dearest friends; but the thought of Rose's having come from Corinth, from the presence of his lost idol, caused a flood of bitter memories to arise, almost unmanning him. By a strong effort of will, he succeeded in hiding all signs of weakness, and facing the ordeal with courage. His first inquiry, after a hearty greeting, was about her friend, Katie.

"I am surprised, sir," replied Rose, who had no suspicion of St. Clair's being in love with Miss Gardiner, "that you ask about her first; for she was complaining of your indifference and neglect in not giving her an opportunity to express her delight at your complete vindication in court."

"It gives me pleasure to know that she thought of me. I supposed all her thoughts were occupied with another," he answered, with a faint attempt at smiling.

"You don't know her. She is not the kind to lose interest in a friend. She was overjoyed when the news of your acquittal was received, and declared that she was positive all the time in her belief that you were not, and could not be, guilty of a deliberate crime. But we were all of that opinion."

"I am delighted to hear that I was not condemned simply because I was accused. But, to change the sub-

ject from myself, I understand that your friend is soon to be married."

"Yes; and a much earlier date has been fixed than Katie desired. While I have seen no signs of dissatisfaction at the step she is taking, still I am sure Katie was in no hurry to lose her membership in the Old Maids' Club. It appears, however, that her mother seconded the importunity of Mr. Clark, and together they induced her to accede to an early date. The reason assigned, I believe, was that Mr. Clark had fallen heir to a considerable fortune in the East, and would have to go there to take possession of it, which he was unwilling to do, unless he could take his bride with him."

"I trust she will be perfectly happy in the union she is forming," said St. Clair, apparently calm, but inwardly a fierce rebellion against fate was raging.

"Oh, I think so. Mr. Clark seems to possess admirable qualities, and displays all the eagerness and devotion that could be expected in a lover."

St. Clair found himself unequal to the task of further discussing the subject, and addressed a question to John Gage, who was seated near by conversing with his father-in-law.

"There is now but one matter of absorbing interest at your old home," answered Gage, "and that is concerning the Raging Tads." He thereupon gave a graphic account of the strange and wonderful rumors in circulation about this new, mysterious order. The obligation of the society prevented his telling that he was a member, even if he had been willing to do so.

He was not in sympathy with the idea underlying such organizations, and was glad to get away at this time, as he knew that the King of the Tads had determined to no longer delay the purpose of bringing Josiah Carter into the toils of the mystic band. He had the fullest sympathy with the end in view, but not with the means employed. Mr. Barnard and Harvey St. Clair were both emphatic in their disapproval of such an organization. St. Clair would have been equally opposed to it had he known that its object was mainly in his interests, but of this he knew nothing.

The next day as Gage and St. Clair were walking along the street, on their way to the latter's place of business, they met Alfred Gibson. He was delighted to meet some one from his old Henderson county home, and detained him in a lengthy conversation, in the course of which he told them of his trouble in court.

"My trial will take place day after to-morrow—will you not both come?" asked Gibson as they were separating; "I have no friends here, and though you are almost strangers, still, you are from my boyhood home, and I am sure from that fact you feel some interest in me. Your presence might help me; at least, I'll feel better to have somebody I can advise with."

"We cannot hope to be of any service to you," replied St. Clair, "but if you wish it we will attend. I have been in trouble myself, and can never forget the comfort I derived from the presence of friends."

How strangely things occur in this life! When St.

Clair and Gage passed on they laughed at the idea of having promised to attend the trial of Alfred Gibson. They knew nothing about him, or the fact of his guilt or innocence, but his earnest importunity had prevailed, and their word having been given, its fulfilment was a necessity from their standpoint of absolute honor to any promise made.

On the day named, Harvey St. Clair and John Gage appeared in the court-room a few minutes before 10 o'clock. Alfred Gibson, accompanied by one unknown to either St. Clair or Gage, soon after entered and took his seat. Both of them had seen the fortune-teller, but in his altered appearance had no thought that the man with Gibson was the same personage that had taken the rôle of the seer in the log cabin on the cliff. Judge Brown entered and took his seat on the bench. A number of cases were rapidly disposed of. At length the name of Alfred Gibson was called, and St. Clair and Gage at once concentrated their attention.

The accused hesitated for a moment about accepting a proffer from the prosecuting attorney to enter a plea of guilty and receive a nominal fine of ten dollars imposed, as was the custom in such cases. It seemed to him possible that, at the last moment, the boys who were witnesses against him might shirk in their evidence and make it convenient not to remember buying the drinks; he would thereby come clear. He announced, "Ready for trial." The witnesses plumbed the mark straight, swore to getting the drinks and pay-

ing for them as charged in the indictment. This settled it. The Judge said:

"Dr. Gibson, stand up and receive the sentence of the court. There are cases of the violation of the laws of the land without a single mitigating circumstance. You, sir, do not belong to the common herd. You are an educated man, with an M. D. attached to your name, and cannot plead the lame excuse that poverty caused you to violate a plain law. You have let avarice and greed lead you to doing so, and the judgment of this court is that in each of the three cases you pay a fine of one hundred dollars, and that you stand committed to the jail of this county until said fines and the cost of each of the proceedings are paid or replevied."

Dr. Gibson was amazed at the severity of the sentence.

As the Judge finished speaking, he raised his right hand to his head and pushed his hair up from his forehead. This motion caused his coat sleeve to draw up on his arm, thereby exposing a liver-colored birthmark that started from the second joint of the thumb and covered nearly half the wrist.

"See the mark, Gibson," whispered Stephen Pye, who sat just behind him. "It is Captain Brannan. Denounce him."

"Hold a minute!" exclaimed Dr. Gibson, "you claim to be Judge Brown, do you not?"

"Certainly, sir," impatiently retorted the Judge.

"It is false. You are Captain Pressley Brannan. I was a member of your company in the war. I know

the birthmark on your wrist just now disclosed. That mark I can swear belongs to none other than Captain Brannan. I denounce you as a fraud and an imposter."

The scene was intensely dramatic. Dr. Gibson, as he uttered the last sentences, rose to his feet and leaning forward pointed his forefinger at the judge. His voice was clear and ringing, filling the courtroom and startling every one present. The Judge turned deathly pale and seemed for a moment unable to speak.

"The accused," he at length said, in a low and hesitating tone, is "drunk or insane. Let the judgment of the court be entered."

The Judge arose, saying, "The Court stands adjourned," and quickly passed from the court-room through a door leading into a small room at the rear of the bench.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE AVENGER'S FATE.

“Revenge, at first though sweet,
Bitter ere long, back on itself recoils.”

—*Milton.*

DR. GIBSON, smarting under the heavy fines imposed and more particularly at the moral lecture which had been given him, strode out into the courthouse yard and into a crowd of men discussing the incident which had just occurred in the courtroom.

“Gentlemen,” said Dr. Gibson, “do you know who that infernal scoundrel is that you have on the bench as judge?”

“Yes,” spoke out one of the crowd, “I know it is Judge Brown, and he is the best judge we have had for a long time.”

“Judge Brown be hanged ! He is an impostor. His name is Presley Brannan. Tell me I don’t know, when I soldiered with him for three years and he was the captain of my company. I tell you that I know it is Brannan, and not Brown. He is an infamous fraud and a contemptible scoundrel, and I will prove it to you before I am done with him.”

The crowd became very indignant at this language, and threatened Dr. Gibson with violence if he did not

stop traducing Judge Brown, who was a great favorite with the people. A personal altercation was imminent when a friend of Dr. Gibson, who had been arranging to replevy the fines imposed, appeared and called him away from the crowd. Soon afterwards Dr. Gibson mounted his horse and went to his home at Tunnel Hill, ten miles distant. That night he wrote a second letter to Dr. Horn, in which he said, "I can now positively say that Presley Brannan, of whose disappearance you told me in reply to my former letter, is here, under the assumed name of J. A. Brown, and is judge of the court at Vernon, Johnson county, in this State. I see nothing changed about him except his hair and beard. When I last saw him in the army both were jet black; now they are nearly snow white. His actions, voice, manner, and particularly the liver-colored birthmark on his right wrist and extending up the arm towards the elbow—all are those of Presley Brannan."

That same night, Stephen Pye, who had remained in Vernon, called at the residence of Judge Brown. He was ushered into the parlor, and in a few minutes the Judge entered. The visitor, who was sitting by the door opening from the hall, the only doorway in the room, arose, turned the key, removed it from the lock, and then resumed his seat."

"What do you mean, sir?" exclaimed the Judge, in indignant tones and with threatening looks.

"I wish a private interview—one where there will be no opportunity for interruption."

"Who are you, sir?"

"I am Stephen Pye."

The Judge involuntarily started, but almost instantly spoke in fearless tones:

"That may be your name, but does not tell me who you are; both the name and your face are unknown to me."

"Sit down," said the visitor. "I do not intend any personal violence to you now, although I have sought you for eight long years with but one intent—to wreak swift and terrible vengeance at first sight of you; but I have promised to postpone my final settlement with you until your identity is made public, as that will help the cause of a friend of mine."

"You are some madman. I have done you no harm that you should seek vengeance upon me. You have mistaken the place, if anyone has injured you. I am Judge Brown. Whom are you seeking?"

"I am not seeking Judge Brown, but Captain Brannan. Have you ever heard of him?"

"No."

"You lie. You are Captain Brannan, who despoiled my home and ruined my life," he cried, with impetuous anger. He saw that the Judge would admit nothing, but deny everything. His rage had been steadily increasing at the cool answers of the Judge; until now all the passion of his soul was aroused. His face worked convulsively, and the veins stood out upon his hands and neck. He sprang to his feet, hissing through his teeth, "I'll kill you now, though I intended to wait."

The Judge arose to defend himself, stepping quickly back to escape the onslaught; but the man made only one step, and then his body swayed—and ashy color

spread over his face. The terrible power of his frenzy had overtaxed the strength of his physical constitution, and paralysis intervened to stay the uplifted hand of vengeance. He sank helpless to the floor. The Judge saw at a glance that he had nothing now to fear. He raised the fallen man and placed him upon a sofa. Unwilling to summon a physician for fear of disclosures that might be made, he sought to ascertain for himself the extent of the paralytic stroke. He had much general knowledge about cases of this kind, and soon satisfied himself that, while the stroke was unusually severe, it affected only the body, not the mind. The man was entirely conscious and suffered no bodily pain. The tongue and throat were so affected that the power of speech was gone forever. The Judge became satisfied that, while he might live for a few days, there was no chance for recovery. The eyes of the stricken man looked with hate into those of the one bending over him, and his fruitless effort to speak told how bitter would be the words of denunciation. While moved with some feelings of compassion for the helpless wreck before him, Judge Brown was incensed at the malignity displayed. Taking a seat by the side of the lounge and looking into the eyes of his defenceless enemy, he said:

“Your eight years’ pursuit of vengeance has come to an unexpected ending. You have gained nothing and lost your life. Even the slight satisfaction of denouncing me is denied you. How much more profitably your time might have been spent.”

The answering look of derision and contempt

seemed to say, "You, of all men, have no right to preach," and the Judge understood the thought in the man's mind.

"Whatever," he continued, "my own moral obliquities have been and are, I am at least in a condition now to impress upon your mind, in your last hours, the folly and futility of the course you have pursued. I emphasize this, not for your good nor for mine. I am not preaching nor moralizing; I am getting even. You sought my death, but failed. I now seek to pay you back in kind. I will not strike at your body, as you would have done at mine. Your body is already insensible to pain, but your mind is still capable of suffering, and as I believe you are the sole cause of what occurred in court to-day, I would not spare you a single pang that may be added to your now full cup of chagrin and mortification at the failure of your plans.

"Now that you are speechless and dying, I have no fear of exposure. Even had you not been stricken and had I escaped your murderous assault, I should have had you placed in a madhouse, where the keeper would have done my bidding in all things. I can easily satisfy Dr. Gibson, and this whole community will stand by me. To you, and to you alone, in your condition, I will admit that I am Presley Brannan, and that J. A. Brown is an assumed name."

The expression on the face of the paralytic spoke volumes. How he longed for life and strength! How his eyes glittered with the conflicting emotions of hatred and helplessness! He tried to turn away from

the look of triumph which his eyes could read in those of his tormentors, but his ears could not shut out the merciless tones that fell upon them.

“I will tell you more, not in excuse for myself or with desire to place blame upon another, but that you may know how little cause you had all these years to nurse your desire for vengeance against me. I want you to feel how much better it would have been if you had forgotten your wife as she forgot you, and had sought some one else, in whose true love you might have found contentment. I make no excuse for myself; I do not care at all what you think of me. Did I rob you of your wife? In one sense, yes; in another, no. I see by your look that you regard me as one who invaded your home, and by the arts of the libertine won an innocent, confiding woman away from her sacred love. You are mistaken. I will tell you the truth; then you can die, knowing how useless was your frenzied hatred of me. When visiting at your home I never spoke of love to Madeline, or made a single overture in the way of attentions, beyond the most ordinary interchange of civilities. After a while I noticed that she exhibited signs of fondness for my society. I then absented myself as much as possible from her home; not that I had any compunctions of conscience in the matter, but I did not then wish any entanglements. She complained of the long intervals between my visits, but I did not shorten them, and I did not dream of ever interfering with the relations existing between you and her. One afternoon I called, after an absence of several weeks, and while

there a heavy rainstorm came up, which caused me to accept a cordial invitation to supper. I was not hungry, and ate sparingly. Your wife was very solicitous, imagining that I was unwell. The storm continued till late in the night, and at the urgent request of your father and mother, as well as Madeline, I consented to remain over night. I retired to my room about ten o'clock. Near midnight I heard a sound, as of the opening of my room door. The lamp was burning low, and when I turned my eyes toward the door I saw a figure in white enter. Softly it came to the side of my couch. It was Madeline, arrayed only in her night robe. She placed her soft, white hand on my brow and gently stroked it.

" 'I was so afraid that you were ill that I could not sleep,' she said.

" 'Oh, I am perfectly well; go back to your room at once, my friend,' I replied.

" 'Why, you ate nothing at supper, and I was so uneasy about you,' and with that she pressed a burning kiss upon my lips and encircled her bare arms around my neck, and rested her throbbing bosom on my breast."

" 'For your sake, I beg of you to go!' I cried.

" 'Oh! do not drive me away! I love you better than life or honor. It will kill me to leave you;' and she nestled closer and closer, covering my face with impassioned kisses."

He paused to note the effect of this tale of shame. No language can describe the anguish depicted on the tortured brow of the stricken avenger.

"What she did was all wrong; what I did was all wrong. There is no excuse, no palliation. It was a crime against society, against purity, and against religion, if there is such a thing. But neither she nor I was held back by moral restraints. We followed the dictates of love, as many others have done. Had she met another whom she loved better, she would have left me as she did you, and as I did her for awhile. This is not a story of a fall from high state of purity, for neither of us was ever pure. She has remained true to me because she loved me. I do not blame her for her course, for I was no better than she. You know that what I have related is true, for she told you when you once found her while searching for me, that she had never loved you. You can see now that your mission of hate and vengeance has not been any more happy or praiseworthy than our mission of unholy love and indulgence. You sought eagerly for vengeance, but failed. I have had my hour in which to return evil for evil done and intended. I leave you now, and will never see you again, but I will arrange to have you cared for until you are laid away under the sod."

Alone the poor, stricken body lay in the quiet parlor. The still more stricken soul searched through all the chambers of memory for the records of the seven years of unrest and bitterness and thirst for vengeance. The anguishing cry arose, "All, all in vain;" but there was no voice to give it utterance. After a little time the mental struggle seemed to gradually subside. The body relaxed somewhat, and over the eyes a softer,

gentler expression came; the lips parted and almost imperceptibly moved, and the angels heard the faint whisper:

“My course was all wrong. ‘Vengeance is mine,’ saith the Lord. I’ve had my punishment at the hands of one with whom God himself hath yet to deal.”

Half an hour later the door opened, and the one sent to care for the unbidden guest found that the visitor of the night was dead. The earthly fortune of the fortune-teller was all told. He had gone to a realm where there was no need of almanacs to mark the recurrence of day and night, to a realm of either eternal day or eternal night.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE UNEXPECTED MESSAGE.

“The heart bowed down by weight of woe,
To weakest hope will cling.”

—*Balfe.*

HARVEY ST. CLAIR and John Gage were amazed beyond measure at the occurrence in the court-room. They knew the story concerning the disappearance of Mrs. Brannan's husband, seven years previous, but had accepted the general belief that the missing one was dead. Now, to hear it boldly proclaimed that the popular Judge Brown of Vernon was none other than the long-lost Captain Brannan aroused their deepest interest and a determination to ascertain the truth of the matter.

Passing from the courthouse to the street, they made inquiry as to who were the most intimate acquaintances of Judge Brown. They were informed that Mr. Rydnour, an attorney at law, was probably the oldest and closest friend of the Judge. Repairing to his office, the two excited and anxious young men introduced themselves to the lawyer and told him of the singular charge that had just been uttered in the court-room. The lawyer was incredulous that so preposterous a statement should have been made.

"Why," he exclaimed, "the man is beside himself. Judge Brown is no imposter. He is an upright, honorable gentleman, and is quite an old citizen here."

"How long have you known him?" asked St. Clair.

"Let me see. He has been on the bench over three years. Before that he was for a number of years employed at a large cooper-shop here. At first he worked at splitting and sawing hoops, but the proprietor, soon discovering that he was a good accountant, made him bookkeeper of the establishment. He held this place until he was elected Police Justice of our town. In that office he displayed such ability and gave such evidence of his fitness for judicial duties that he was chosen to the office, which he now holds, of County Judge. I have known him for about ten years, and I can assure you he is not the kind of a man to live under an assumed name."

"Are you quite sure he has lived here longer than seven years?" asked Gage.

"No doubt of that," replied the attorney, and he was honest in making the statement. His acquaintance with Judge Brown seemed to cover a much longer period than was actually the case. "There is nothing in the statement you heard in court. No one here would listen to it a moment. A fancied resemblance, magnified by anger and resentment, is all there is in it."

The two friends went away satisfied, agreeing to make no mention of the matter whatever when it could by any chance reach the ears of their acquaintances in Corinth.

That evening St. Clair received a message, imparted

to him by Rose German, which tortured, but at the same time pleased him. At Mr. Barnard's home, the family and a small party of friends were assembled in the parlor, enjoying Miss German's music, as she obligingly and untiringly played and sang. All were charmed with her rich, sweet voice, as, one after another, beautiful songs of love and sentiment were rendered in soulful strains. St. Clair stood beside her, turning the pages. His heart was sad and mournful as he thought of that one, now forever lost to him, who could have sung a song of love to him sweeter than any other earthly music. The singing he heard was exquisite, but that which he longed in his soul to feel would have been far more entrancing. He kept a brave and cheerful face, but his heart was weary and wretched. At length Miss Rose turned from the piano, saying:

"I think I have earned a rest now. Come, Mr. St. Clair, let us sit down by the window. I have something to tell you." He escorted her to a seat in the large bay-window, where their conversation would be wholly uninterrupted, and would not interfere with the talk of the others.

"I received a letter to-day, and it contained a message to you. Can you not guess whom it is from?"

"I am quite at a loss. I'll venture the guess, however, that it is from Lizzie Gage."

"A poor venture. The writer is Katie Gardiner."

He started. A shade of pain passed over his face, but was unnoticed. The one who was in his every

thought by day and by night, and yet the last one that he would have expected a message from.

"Indeed?" with an effort to speak calmly. "Has she sent me an invitation to her wedding?"

"Still a bad guesser, yet your question reminds me of what had not occurred to me before. She does not even mention that subject—the one I would suppose to be the uppermost in her thoughts, as the date fixed is so near at hand."

"So I should have thought." He was wild to know what word was sent to him, but restrained all signs of interest. Rose was ignorant of his love for her friend. She knew he had paid Katie some attentions previous to his arrest, but since that time he had not been to Corinth, and Rose believed that he had no other feelings towards Katie than those of ordinary friendship.

"Well, her message to you is an invitation, but not to her marriage. It is to a meeting of the Old Maids' Club at Judge Triston's a week from next Thursday. As she knew I was to return the first of the coming week, she has arranged for a gathering of all the friends who were present at the first open meeting of the club." Reading from the letter: "Tell Mr. St. Clair that I think his departure for Vernon without saying good-bye to his friends here was very unkind. They desired very much to express their pleasure in his vindication. However, we will forgive him that offense if he will apologize by accepting the invitation I send through you. Please add your request to mine for his acceptance.' You surely will not say nay when two of the famous nine old maids unite in the invita-

tion. Mr. Gage and I will both ask Mr. Barnard to grant you a brief vacation. It would add greatly to our pleasure if you could return with us and be present at the party."

St. Clair listened with mingled feelings of delight and despair. She had not forgotten him, yet was promised to another. How could he endure to see her now! Yet how could he live without seeing her again! Such thoughts raged through his mind, but, outwardly, he showed no signs of disturbance. When Rose ceased speaking he had made up his mind, and answered promptly:

"If Mr. Barnard can spare me for a few days I shall take pleasure in accepting the kind invitation." He felt that it would be pain and not pleasure; but he must see her once more, if it killed him.

CHAPTER XXVI.

CONFESSION OF CRIME.

“To what gulfs
A single deviation from the track
Of human duties leads.”

—*Byron.*

“Guiltiness would speak, tho’ tongues were out of use.”

—*Shakespeare.*

ON the following Tuesday, John Gage and wife, Harvey St. Clair and Rose German reached their respective homes. St. Clair spent the time at his old home in the country, battling in soul for strength for the ordeal of meeting the loved one, now lost to him forever.

He found his brother James in a state of restlessness and mental excitement, but could not obtain a satisfactory explanation of the mood. James denied that he was nervous or disturbed about anything. The fact was that Harvey’s unexpected visit was considered very inopportune by his brother. The latter, in connection with Harry Thorne, Frank Burton and a dozen others had arranged for some decisive work under cover of their secret clan, the Raging Tads. It was known that Harvey St. Clair was bitterly opposed to organizations of this kind and would interfere by

giving warning, if he discovered the designs contemplated. The real and only purpose of the secret society was to discover and punish all who had a hand in putting the shame of arrest and trial upon Harvey St. Clair. He knew nothing of this object, and would have been all the more opposed to the movement if he had known it. James St. Clair and his associates, believing that Josiah Carter's prosecution of Harvey St. Clair had been instigated by one more cunning than he, were seeking positive proof of the truth of their suspicions. Their plans had all been laid and matured to make the final stroke on this very week. The clan was to meet on Wednesday night in the log cabin on the cliff to initiate Josiah Carter into the mysteries of the secret order. He had been easily persuaded to seek admission by the intimation from one of the members that a certain man (whom they knew Carter hated intensely) had fallen under the ban of the society, and that he could have a hand in the ducking to be administered to his enemy.

The rendezvous of the Tads had not been discovered. Owing to the secluded location of the cabin and the precaution of heavy blankets having been closely fitted over the inside of the windows, no light was ever seen to attract attention. A careful examination of the premises disclosed in the floor of one end of the cabin a trapdoor. Under this was a large circular hole about twelve feet deep. At the bottom of this was found an aperture large enough for a man to crawl through, which led to quite an extensive cave reaching back several hundred yards from the edge of the cliff. Har-

ry Thorne and his companions with lanterns explored the interior of the cave and found evidence to show that in the past the place had been used by moonshiners. They understood then why the cabin was built there, and why no one now living in the community even knew of the existence of the cave. They saw that the deep hole would be useful for their purposes, but as they would have no occasion to use the cave, the aperture from the bottom of the well-hole to the cave was carefully filled up. One of the Tads who was a carpenter fixed in perfect order all the arrangements of the trapdoor for the purposes designed in the initiation work of the mystic band. These were made, however, for one special candidate.

Wednesday evening James St. Clair made excuse to his brother that he wished to make a call at Gage's. Harvey had been pleased to note a growing intimacy between James and Lizzie Gage, for she was a girl he would be proud to accept as a sister; so he had no misgivings that James' mission out that night was other than on "love's errand bent." On reaching the cabin at about eight o'clock, he found Harry Thorne, Frank Burton and ten others already there. The only other members of the Tads who had knowledge of this meeting had gone, as arranged, to meet Josiah Carter and conduct him to the rendezvous. Half an hour later he and his victim arrived, entering the room which had once been used as a kitchen, but which had now been adjusted to the uses of an ante-room in the initiation work. Soon everything was in readiness.

In the door opening from the ante-room to the main

room was a round hole with a slide over it. Josiah Carter was instructed by the one acting as Outside Guide to give three raps on the door, and when the slide was raised to give a certain password. As the candidate placed his mouth to the opening and was about to utter the password, the Inside Guide squirted from a large syringe a great stream of water down the throat and over his face. It was an unexpected and startling setback, but the guide held Carter firmly by the arm, saying:

"Never mind; that was only a little pleasantry. You will soon be through, and then you can enjoy seeing others initiated. Let me wipe the water from your face." Taking from his pocket a black silk handkerchief, which was filled with lampblack, he wiped face, neck and ears. The candidate was not aware that he had been transformed into the appearance of a black negro. Being now admitted to the inside, he was conducted from one post to another, receiving at each the most solemn adjurations. So terrible were the curses invoked in case of falsehood or treachery that Carter was becoming more and more nervous and frightened at each succeeding ceremony. At last he was taken to a certain spot, enjoined to kneel and with uplifted hand to take the final oath:

"I adjure you to speak the truth. The most awful and fearful consequences will follow a false statement in the oath you are now required to take," and the King Tad's attitude and manner were as threatening and solemn as the words he uttered. "Now repeat after me:"

"I, Josiah Carter, solemnly swear that I will keep inviolate all the secrets and mysteries of this order, and will with my life defend and protect under any and all circumstances every member thereof. And I further swear that I have never knowingly accused any one unjustly—that I have never sworn falsely against any man or tried to fasten guilt and shame upon one I knew to be innocent, and if I have now spoken untruthfully, I pray, as a just punishment for my guilt that my skin may turn black and that I may sink into the bowels of the earth. Amen."

With a majestic wave of his hand King Tad cried, "Hear, O Mighty One, if he has spoken true, let him stand forth honored and beloved of all men; but if he has lied, let his skin now turn to blackness and the earth open to receive his vile body."

Suddenly the trapdoor fell and Carter with a wild shriek of terror disappeared into the darkness. Instantly, as prearranged, every light in the room was extinguished. Care had been taken to fill the bottom with soft dirt to prevent serious injury from the fall.

The Tads silently gathered around the opening, listening in utter darkness to the terrified pleadings for mercy, as their victim crawled around his narrow cell, feeling on every side only the smooth earth walls. Like most bad and unprincipled men, he was superstitious and cowardly. His craven spirit gave way under the pressure of the silence and darkness. He sank upon the ground, whining piteously: "The earth has indeed swallowed me up. Oh! why did I make

such a prayer, when I knew I had sworn falsely! I prayed, too, that my skin might turn black. Oh, surely, that could not be."

A bright light shone on the wall before him, and he looked into a mirror that reflected a face as black as a full-blooded negro's.

"Oh, my God! my God!" he cried, and fell back almost in a swoon. When he opened his eyes a moment later all was darkness. On one side of the wall a large mirror had been imbedded, and opposite it a dark lantern, with attachment to the slide reaching through the floor above.

"What shall I do? Is there no mercy, no hope, no escape from this horrible fate?"

Out of the darkness from above, in deep, sepulchral tones, came the answer to his cry:

"In confession alone is there hope. Recant the lie; tell the whole truth. Then, and then only, will the earth give thee back, and whiteness return to thy flesh."

"I will speak the truth—the truth only."

"See thou do it. One single falsehood more, and thy doom is sealed forever. Answer. Did you undertake to fasten guilt and shame upon one you knew to be innocent?"

"Yes; in the case of Harvey St. Clair."

"Tell how and why you came to pursue the course you did. Omit no fact, screen no one, if you expect mercy."

"I had not thought of denying my signature to the note until it was suggested to me."

"By whom?"

"Herman Clark."

"Go on."

"He told me that St. Clair was under a cloud and had no money, and that if I denied signing the note and charged him with forgery, I should have no difficulty in securing his conviction. He then showed me how to make a different signature on the petitions he had at the bank, and which he would arrange to have introduced at the trial."

"Are there any other crimes you and he have been guilty of?"

"Yes. He has discovered that Katie Gardiner has fallen heir to a large fortune, and he has forged her name to a power of attorney, giving him full authority to act for her. He has thus intercepted all correspondence and kept her in ignorance of the matter. I have certified to the forged papers as a magistrate. I know I am confessing a great crime, but you promised mercy if I told the whole truth. I will tell everything."

The astonishment of the listeners was unbounded. Here was a revelation of perfidy not dreamed of.

"One further question: Will you face Herman Clark in our presence and repeat this statement, and can you at the same time produce any of the forged papers you speak of?"

"Yes; if you will only take me out of this horrible place."

At a signal from Thorne, the lamps were relighted and a ladder lowered. The miserable wretch trem-

blingly climbed to the floor above. A consultation was then held, and a course of action determined upon, the nature and results of which will be made known in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XXVII.

IN THE TOILS.

“Dishonor waits on perfidy. The villain
Should blush to think a falsehood: 'tis the crime
Of cowards.”

—*Johnson.*

As Thursday drew towards its close, Harvey St. Clair grew more and more nervous and apprehensive about his meeting with Katie Gardiner. He longed to see her, and yet dreaded the ordeal. Knowing that the time named for her marriage with Herman Clark was now scarcely three weeks off, he felt that his own fate was sealed; that seeing her again could do no good—would only add to his already overflowing misery. Many times during the day he resolved to send a note of regret and immediately start for Vernon, but as often changed his mind. Why should he be so cowardly? He had never told her of his love, and she had proven by her betrothal to Clark that he had no place in her affections. He would meet his fate like a man, and give no outward manifestations of his life's great disappointment.

Reasoning thus, he found himself at the proper hour at the door of Judge Triston's home. Katie received him so frankly and cordially that he at once felt at

greater ease than he had hoped. All his old friends expressed their delight at seeing him again, and he was soon surrounded by a large and gay circle of admiring friends. His old-time spirit was aroused, and to deaden the pain at his heart he exerted himself to please and entertain. He was the lion of the evening. Herman Clark's hatred and envy were awakened, but he kept a smiling face. As much as possible he hovered at the side of Katie, or near her, that no one might forget his proprietorship.

During the evening St. Clair accidentally overheard a conversation that startled him to the depths of his soul. He was seated with his back to a window opening upon a porch. He recognized the voices of Frank Burton and Rose German, who were sitting on the verandah, quite near the open window.

"The wedding has been postponed," he heard Frank say. A buzz of talk in the room prevented St. Clair from catching Rose's reply.

"It will never take place," said Frank. "She never loved him, and for some time the conviction that she was making a fatal mistake has been growing stronger. The other day she told him that the day fixed for the wedding must be postponed indefinitely."

Again Rose's words failed to reach St. Clair's ears.

"In twenty-four hours you will know all. You are to play a part in the startling drama of real life, where Katie will be rescued from a villain's machinations, and he will be consigned to where he belongs—the State's prison." Frank moved nearer to his companion, and

their further dialogue was in tones too low to reach the listener's ears.

The feelings of St. Clair may be imagined but not described. A wild hope thrilled in his soul. He was not elated at thought of his rival's downfall or danger, but by the hope that Katie had not really loved another. Just then the one on whom all his thoughts were centered came towards him.

"Mr. St. Clair," she said, with one of her brightest and kindest smiles, "I have a confession to make to you. I have discovered that I once mentally did you an injustice, and I cannot become good friends with myself until I express my regret for the wrong."

"Here, now, Miss Katie," exclaimed Harry Thorne, who was standing by. "Such confessions need not be made before a houseful of people. Harvey is going to stop with me for a day or two, and I will see that you are not deprived of an occasion to set yourself right."

Thorne interposed thus in order to disappoint and chagrin Clark, who, he saw, was eagerly listening to hear Katie's speech to St. Clair. Since the revelations of the night before, Thorne could with difficulty tolerate the presence of Clark, but the plan arranged was that the latter should not be allowed to have any suspicion that his villainy was known.

"Very well," replied Katie, laughingly. "If I can have a more favorable opportunity to unload the burden from my conscience, I can wait."

"Now, I have a confession to make that is due to this whole company. Attention, everybody!" Mr. Thorne spoke in a tone to reach the ears of all, and

as he was a general favorite, everyone instantly became silent.

"My apology," he continued, "is directed specially to Mr. Clark. You remember that at the first open meeting of the Old Maids' Club, Miss Gardiner related the story of her visit to the fortune-teller, closing by reading the words of the seer as they had been written on the back of a card by Mr. Clark at the time they were uttered. On turning the card, she was surprised to see the name of Harvey St. Clair instead of Herman S. Clark. Many of you supposed that Clark had had in his pocket one of St. Clair's cards and had used it instead of one of his own without knowing he had done so. I will now explain the whole matter. A few days before that meeting, while sitting at this table, I observed the visiting cards of both the gentlemen. They were of the same size. On Mr. Clark's card were written the words of the fortune-teller. St. Clair's card was blank. I was greatly amused to note that the description, as to height, beard, complexion, color of eyes and hair, could apply to either one, and that the initials were in one sense the same. It occurred to me that I might perpetrate a joke at Miss Katie's expense, not thinking, at the time, that anyone else would ever discover it. I copied on St. Clair's card words written on Clark's, put the latter in my pocket, and left the former in its place. Now I have both here," holding them above his head, one in each hand. "On one is the name of Harvey St. Clair, on the other Herman S. Clark, and on the reverse side of each are the same words. Mr. Clark wrote the words

on his card, I wrote those on St. Clair's; both of us heard the fortune-teller utter them. The question is still open, Which one was meant by the oracle? To settle the momentous question, I propose that the cards be put into a hat, Miss Katie be blindfolded and required to draw one of them out."

"Hear! hear!" cried everybody. "That's the very thing."

"Here's my hat," exclaimed Frank Burton, and snatching the cards from Thorne's hands, he placed them in it.

Rose German stepped up to Katie and tied a handkerchief over her eyes before she had time to say a word.

"Draw! draw! It is all in fun!" were the exclamations on all sides, drowning her effort to demur to the proceedings.

Her hand trembled as it came in contact with the hat held out to her. She lifted the first card her fingers touched. Eagerly it was grasped by Thorne. He read aloud the name on it, "Harvey St. Clair." Taking out the one remaining in the hat, he turned to Clark and with a profound bow, said: "Here is your card, Mr. Clark." Thorne wheeled away as he spoke, and was across the room before Clark could recover sufficiently from his amazement at the action to utter a word. "Oh, how he hates me," said Thorne to himself. "He knows I hate him, too; but he don't know I now have him in my power. I can hardly keep my hands from the scoundrel's throat; but it is his last

day to pass as a gentleman. To-morrow his doom overtakes him."

Katie, on removing the handkerchief from her eyes, broke into a laugh, exclaiming, "What nonsense!" and immediately gave her attention to the now departing guests. Mr. Clark placed the card, which had been thrust into his hand, on the centre-table. He was very far from feeling that he had experienced a triumphant or even a happy evening. True, Katie had treated him cordially, and had conversed with him more than with any one else. She had not broken off the engagement; but a few days before had frankly told him that the day set for the wedding must be deferred; that, while she cherished a high regard for him, she was not satisfied with the state of her own heart, and must be allowed time to fully understand herself. He pleaded earnestly against postponement, but gained only the concession that, at the end of ten days, she would give her final decision as to the question of postponement. (That time would expire on the coming Sunday.) As a result of this conversation, he had visited Josiah Carter, and together they had prepared forged papers, proving identity and all that was necessary to enable him, just as soon as the death of Katie's uncle occurred (of which he expected daily to be advised), to get into his own possession the large personal estate bequeathed to her. If the marriage was to be put off, he would not longer delay action in securing the fortune. These forged papers, with the dates left blank, were yet in the hands of Carter; con-

sequently he could (as he did) positively promise the Tads to produce the evidence of Clark's guilt.

The consultation of the Tads after the confession made by Josiah Carter resulted in the following plan of action: Carter was to be held a prisoner in the cabin until Friday. He was required to write a note to his family, saying that business had called him to another part of the county, and that he would not be home until Friday evening; also a note to Clark (which was to be left at the bank in Memphis), requesting a conference with him at the cabin on the cliff at three o'clock Friday afternoon. These letters were written by Carter, and given to one of the society to deliver.

Several of the members volunteered to take turns in guarding Carter, who expressed a readiness to comply with whatever was desired. Plenty of provisions were brought out early Thursday morning by members who were not on guard duty, and all regarded the new experience into which they had fallen as a jolly frolic. The prospect of entrapping Clark and showing up his villainy in a way to humiliate him most gave zest to their work, and caused them to make light of the danger they were incurring by their unlawful procedure.

Long before three o'clock on the eventful Friday, Thorne, Burton and all the members who had taken part on Wednesday were at the cabin. Within a few minutes of the time appointed Clark was seen coming. Without knocking he opened the door and stepped inside. Josiah Carter was alone in the room. Harry

Thorne and James St. Clair had been secreted outside, and immediately followed Clark, entering almost on his heels. They closed and locked the door. At the same moment the opposite door from the ante-room opened, and Frank Burton, with more than half a dozen others, advanced into the room. Clark, who had not had time to speak to Carter, gave a quick glance at those behind and before him, and at once realized that for some purpose or other he had been entrapped.

"What does this mean?" he demanded, darting a look of towering wrath at Carter.

"Never mind, Mr. Carter," said Thorne, who had been selected as spokesman. "He has been forced to what he has done in this matter. I have a few questions to ask you."

"You have no right to ask me any questions. I demand that you open that door. By what authority do you restrain my liberty or question me under duress?"

"I know what I am doing," coolly replied Mr. Thorne, "and you will find that bluff will avail you nothing. If you do not wish to speak, very well. I will direct my questions to Mr. Carter. He will answer in your presence. Did this man, Herman Clark, counsel and advise you to charge forgery against Harvey St. Clair, and, after his arrest, get you to sign certain petitions he had in the bank in a different character of signature from that you had used on the note?"

"He did."

"You lie!" exclaimed Clark, in a towering rage. Then, turning to Thorne: "You have terrorized this

man, so that he has framed a pack of lies on me, in hopes of securing greater leniency for himself."

"Mr. Carter," said Thorne, without paying any attention to the looks or words of Clark, "do you know that this man by some means learned that the uncle of Katie Gardiner desired reconciliation, and had made a will in her favor?"

"He told me so."

The defiant look on Clark's face changed; a wave of fear and despair turned it to an ashen hue. He realized that his bold game was lost.

"Has he, in connection with you, prepared forged proofs of identity, and powers of attorney, to be used after the expected death in securing for himself a fortune devised to another?"

"He has."

"Gentlemen, I protest against this outrage. Mr. Carter is answering under duress. His statements are all false, and he will deny every word when he is not in jeopardy of his life."

"Mr. Carter," continued Thorne, ignoring Clark entirely, "can you produce any of the forged papers in the handwriting of Herman Clark?"

"I have them at my home."

Clark had been moving restlessly to and fro, unable in his great agitation to keep still. Thorne was watching him closely, and just as he reached a certain spot, signal was given and the spring was pressed. The floor parted, and Clark shot down like an arrow into the darkness. The heavy doors closed again, and

only the faint sound of bitter ravings and cursings could be heard.

"Now, James St. Clair, get your buggy from its hiding place and take Mr. Carter to his home, and bring him and the forged papers back with you," said Thorne.

"I'll bring him back, dead or alive, within an hour."

"Burton, go on your mission and be here by the time St. Clair returns. One more scene of terrible humiliation and shame for the scoundrel who so ruthlessly trampled on the rights of others, and I am done—my reign as King of Tads will to-day cease forever. I have not approved our methods, but for once I have joined with you in an effort to accomplish good through evil processes. Our success does not justify the means. In the end, if our organization were continued, the self-seeking and the promoters of unworthy motives would gain the ascendancy, and the final results would accomplish far more evil than good. Our course cannot be justified or defended on the principles of law and order; yet we have accomplished what the slow processes of law might never have reached. Still, it was wrong, and perfect civilization is retarded rather than advanced by the methods we have pursued. To-day this society must disband, or I shall be found as conspicuous in antagonizing its aims as I have lately been in leading its forces."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

UNMASKED.

“O ! how glorious ’t is
To right the oppress’d and bring the felon vile
To just disgrace !”

—*Somerville.*

IN less than an hour James St. Clair returned with Carter and the papers.

A few minutes later Burton returned, but not alone. Those accompanying him entered and remained in the ante-room.

“Open the trap and let down the ladder,” said Thorne, and his order was promptly executed.

Herman Clark was not loath to avail himself of the opportunity to escape from the darkness and silence. During the hour of his dungeon experience he had realized fully the awful humiliation and dreadful consequences that would necessarily follow the exposure that had been brought about.

Nearly every one present during the revelation had been for a long time his familiar acquaintances. He had posed among them as a young man of high moral tendencies, and he knew that now the mask had been completely torn off. He felt keenly the loathing exhibited in every countenance at the statements of

Carter. He had fondly counted on a few more days of time in which to accomplish his evil designs. On the following Monday he was to have arranged a financial settlement with Carter for his part in the crime, and then depart never to return, unless it should be to claim Katie as a bride, by which means he felt exposure would be avoided. Now all was lost, and dire punishment must follow, unless some means of escape arose. This was one thought that racked his brain. "Escape! escape! and fly to the uttermost parts of the earth," was the one cry ringing through his tortured mind.

Tremblingly and with downcast look he reached the floor. The trap was closed, and he was directed to a seat which faced the ante-room door and only a few feet from it. He knew that an attempt to escape now was useless, and that bluff and defiance would be of no avail to him, while surrounded by a dozen men who, right or wrong, were determined to hold him. He observed that the door to the adjoining room was partly open, but no one was visible except those in the main room.

"I am told by Mr. Carter," began Thorne in deliberate tones, "that you employed a lawyer in Cincinnati to draft proper legal documents by which a supposed inheritance could be established, and that you copied those forms, making such changes in names, dates, etc., as would cover the bequests of Jared Gardiner. These papers which I now hold in my hands are in due form of law if the signatures and official attestations are genuine. One of these docu-

ments purports to bear the duly attested signature of Katie Gardiner. Now, Mr. Clark," and Thorne advanced with the paper and pointed to the place, "is this name signed by her own hand?"

"Yes," replied Clark, with an effort to speak confidently. The uppermost desire of his heart now was to get away from the large number restraining him. If he could only so arrange as to have but a single guard, he would readily risk his life in a fight for escape. "If you will now go with me to the home of Miss Gardiner, she will verify it."

"That is unnecessary," coolly replied Thorne, as he stamped his heel loudly on the floor. Immediately the door Clark was facing swung wide open, and Katie Gardiner, Rose German, Lizzie Gage, accompanied by Harvey St. Clair, walked in and stood before him. No words can describe the look of misery, shame and defeat that overspread his countenance. It was not the sense of his crimes that overwhelmed him, but the awful ignominy of his situation. For these four, of all others in the world, to face him in his hour of fearful disgrace, was the very acme of mental despair and torture.

Like Cain of old, he cried out, "My punishment is greater than I can bear. I surrender; take me to prison at once—anything, anywhere is better than this."

Harry Thorne, who, from the first, was prepared with legal warrants for arrest, called for the sheriff, who had all the time been in waiting. As that official

stepped forward, Thorne said: "Take your prisoner, and please remove him at once from our presence."

When the news of the arrest reached the bank at Memphis, the officials made an investigation and found that Clark had been systematically robbing the bank. These charges were added against him. In due course of legal procedure trial was had, conviction secured and the doors of the State's prison closed on the miserable wretch who had so ruthlessly trampled on the honor and rights of those he pretended to befriend, respect and love.

On the same day this startling dénouement occurred at the log cabin, Judge Triston, who was attending circuit court in the adjoining county, met Dr. Horn, with whom he had long been well acquainted.

"I have something I wish you to read," said the doctor, and he handed Judge Triston the letter which the reader will remember was written by Dr. Gibson the night after his trial.

The Judge carefully read the letter and was astounded to learn from its contents that the long-lost Captain Brannan was alive and located under an assumed name at Vernon in adjoining State. As he felt there might be some mistake, he resolved to wait further developments before mentioning the matter to Mrs. Brannan. His knowledge of Dr. Horn's character assured him that there would be no rest until the truth of his correspondent's assertion was fully investigated.

"Which way are you going?" asked the Judge, observing a grip in the doctor's hands.

"I just got word that a sister I have in Ohio is very ill, and I am going to see her."

They parted, and soon afterwards Judge Triston saw the doctor board the up packet to Louisville. We will follow him on his visit to his sick sister. Landing at Louisville, he took the first train to Indianapolis. On arrival, he proceeded to the office of the secretary of the Masonic Aid Society, and finding the secretary, Mr. Martin, in, he inquired:

"Have you paid the Brannan insurance yet?"

"No; the time is not quite out."

"I thought about making a little western trip," said Dr. Horn. "I don't believe Brannan is dead, and I thought if you would make it interesting I might scare him up. If I can get enough to pay my expenses, which will not exceed \$500, I will make an effort to locate him."

"What's done will have to be done speedily, for only about four or five weeks remain until time is up, when I have agreed to pay the policy," answered Secretary Martin.

"Well, what do you say to my proposition? Will you pay my expenses?"

"No, I can't agree to do that; but I will say that if in your travels you find Brannan and furnish evidence that he is alive, I will give you \$500 in cash."

"Will you give me a writing to that effect?"

"Yes," said the secretary, "I will reduce the agreement to writing."

In a few minutes the paper was drawn and signed by Secretary Martin, for the Masonic Aid Society.

On receiving the document, Dr. Horn left the office, and, going to the depot of the Indianapolis and Vincennes Railroad, purchased a ticket to Vernon, where he arrived about six o'clock that evening. After supper at the hotel, he went to the County Clerk's office, where he fortunately found that officer at work. He introduced himself, and explained his business by showing Dr. Gibson's letter.

The clerk was thunderstruck at the revelation. His respect and high regard for Judge Brown was such that he actually shed tears at the possibility of Gibson's statements being true. He had heard of some such charge having been made on the day of Gibson's trial, but he, like everyone else at Vernon, had dismissed the matter as unworthy of credence, attributing it to the ravings of an angry man over some fancied resemblance. Now the letter he read was so explicit in detail and emphatic in its declarations that the clerk was amazed and deeply moved.

"All doubts can be solved in a few moments, if I can have an interview with your Judge Brown," said Dr. Horn. "I served with Brannan in the army, and could not be deceived as to his identity. I should like in some way to get to see him without his knowing it."

"I can manage that. I have just prepared an order in a case and have to submit it to Judge Brown before entering it in the order book. I will take a lantern and go down to his office, which is in his residence, only a short distance from here. You can go along and station yourself on the verandah. I will knock at his office door, and when he opens it I will throw the light

of the lantern on his face, so that you can have a good look at him."

With this understanding, the clerk and Dr. Horn proceeded to the residence and office of Judge Brown. On reaching the porch they saw, through the office window, the Judge, comfortably seated before a blazing fire, listening to a recitation of a young law student who was taking lessons from the Judge. Dr. Horn stationed himself about ten feet in rear of the door. The clerk rapped, and Judge Brown immediately arose and opened the door.

"Come in," said the Judge, recognizing the visitor.

"No," replied the clerk, "I called to submit the order in C. vs. B., and I wish to make an inquiry about this." Here he raised the paper and lantern on a level with the Judge's face. Just then Dr. Horn, who was a very large man, weighing 350 pounds, and whom no one, having once seen him, could fail to recognize, stepped forward and held out his hand, saying:

"Pres., how are you?"

The recognition was instantaneous.

"Doc., come in," and to the clerk, "I will see you in the morning."

The law student was unceremoniously dismissed, and the Judge turned the bolt of the office door. For some time the two men remained silent. Brannan, alias Judge Brown, spoke first:

"Doc., what has become of Helena?"

"She is at Judge Triston's, in Corinth."

"My God! I supposed she was dead," and he bowed

his head and covered his face with his hands, remaining motionless and silent for a long time.

"My old comrade," at length spoke Dr. Horn, as he placed his hand on the Judge's shoulder, "do not give way to despair. I, as your old intimate associate, know you, of course, but I can easily convince Gibson that he is mistaken, and everyone else who heard his words will agree with you in saying he was drunk or insane. If I tell Gibson he is mistaken he will apologize, and if you let him off light he will never trouble you any more."

"Oh, doctor, will you do this for me? I plead for your mercy. I have a good name here. To ruin me would do you no good. Oh! I beseech you to keep the knowledge you have a secret so long as I live."

"I pledge you my word of honor that I will never betray you."

Dr. Horn was in some respects the "prince of good fellows," would divide his last dollar with not only a friend, but a stranger as well, yet he had the fault of telling all he knew, and sometimes "a little the rise." He did not possess the faculty of keeping a secret—no matter how important it might be to himself or others. He had already made confidants of three or four men at the hotel during his supper hour, fully divulging to them, as he had to the clerk of the court, his mission to their town. Each one was enjoined to keep the matter a secret. He promised them that when he had ascertained whether Judge Brown was Brannan he would report in the morning.

The interview between Dr. Horn and Brannan

lasted for several hours, during which the former gave a full history of everything which had taken place at the old home of the latter in connection with his disappearance; and in return Brannan told the story of his wanderings and experiences from the hour of his departure to the present time. About three o'clock in the morning they separated, and, as arranged between them, Dr. Horn went to the hotel for his grip and Brannan went to a livery-stable for a carriage and driver. In this conveyance the doctor was soon seated and rapidly taken in a northern direction to a point forty miles distant, on another line of railroad, by which he could be conveyed back to his home. When daylight came the big doctor was many miles out of town, consequently could not be seen by those to whom he had promised to report.

Judge Brown convened his court at the usual hour on that morning; but the clerk observed that he was extremely nervous and restless. About ten o'clock some of the gentlemen to whom Dr. Horn had talked at the hotel walked into the courthouse, and, noting the haggard looks and agitated condition of the Judge, they retired to the courthouse yard and began to talk to the groups of men standing around about the big doctor and his startling story. It was soon very generally known that there was something wrong about Judge Brown.

At noon the court was adjourned until the following morning. The Judge called the clerk aside and asked him if he had had any conversation with the doctor the night previous,

"Yes," replied the clerk, deeply pained, but feeling he should speak frankly; "Dr. Horn not only told me all, but I find that he revealed the whole object of his mission here to several persons at the hotel before seeing me, and that they have given it publicity by telling the whole town."

The Judge turned dejectedly away, directing his steps to his residence. He was seen no more until six o'clock in the evening, train-time on the Vincennes & Cairo Railroad, when he boarded the train. That night at Cairo he wrote a letter to the clerk of his Court, enclosing his written resignation as Judge, with the request that it be promptly forwarded to the Governor of the State.

Here we leave Presley Brannan, alias Judge Brown. We shall hear of him once more. In the meantime, we will visit our friends at Corinth.

CHAPTER XXIX.

TRUE AND YET UNTRUE.

“A ruddy drop of manly blood
The surging sea outweighs;
The world uncertain comes and goes,
The lover rooted stays.”

—*Emerson.*

It was through the arrangements made by Harry Thorne and Frank Burton that Harvey St. Clair was present at the log cabin dénouement. He was in the dark as to what was to happen. The invitation to accompany the three young ladies with Frank Burton was readily accepted without question. The company was specially agreeable to him, and the object was merely a pleasure trip. So he regarded it when asked to be one of a party for an afternoon drive to the country. On being ushered into the ante-room of the cabin he first realized that he was being led into some affair of unusual nature. A few words from Burton explained the situation, and he was ready (in full sympathy with his companions) to await developments. It was different with Katie Gardiner. She knew the object of the meeting here, as did Rose German and Lizzie Gage. At an early hour in the forenoon Thorne and Burton had held a long conference with Katie. All the revelations of Josiah Carter as to the part

Herman Clark had taken in the proceedings against the good name and liberty of Harvey St. Clair were told her in minutest detail; and then his actions and motives concerning her uncle's will were revealed. Knowing her relations towards Clark, the story was told delicately, just as brothers would inform and advise a sister under such circumstances. They knew that if she really loved Clark, she would refuse to believe the statements made, and would resent them. Their observations, however, of late had led them to the conclusion that no real love for him existed, and that their message, while astounding and painful, would not prove heartrending.

This conjecture they soon found to be correct. She was at first stupefied and amazed. Soon indignation manifested itself. After a moment of silence and thought, she said:

"I am prepared to accept as truth what you have told me. Many little things of late have raised doubts in my mind as to the nobleness and sincerity of Mr. Clark's nature. While I could never have imagined such meanness and perfidy as you have revealed, I had recently instinctively been growing distrustful of him, and had determined at our next meeting to dismiss him from my company and my thoughts forever. Though deeply pained and grieved, I am not heartbroken. I might have forgiven him for trying to steal my fortune, but could never forgive his keeping from me, even for an hour, the knowledge of my uncle's illness and desire to see me; nor could I forgive his effort to put undeserved disgrace upon one

for whom he professed love and friendship. I am perfectly willing, if you think best, and desire it, to face Mr. Clark at any time or in any manner you choose to arrange."

It was then suggested that Rose German and Lizzie Gage be sent for, that she might have the company of ladies, in case she should be called for.

It was in this manner that the presence at the cabin of the four who added so much to the bitterness of Clark's cup of woe was provided for.

One evening shortly afterward Harvey St. Clair called at the residence of Judge Triston. During the exciting scenes of their last meeting St. Clair and Katie had had no opportunity for conversation, except such as related to the startling events. Harry Thorne, through the use of the telegraph, had received full information from Philadelphia concerning Jared Gardiner's condition and his desire to see his niece, and had imparted the same to her. When St. Clair called he found her in the midst of preparations for a journey to Philadelphia. The date arranged for her departure was such, however, as to give ample time for a lengthy interview with her visitor.

"I wish to speak very frankly," said Katie when, after a pleasant greeting, they were seated in the drawing-room. "To me, it is a false sense of propriety not to acknowledge a mental as well as a spoken injustice. I find I did you a wrong in my mind, although I did not by word or act of any kind convey it to any one. I believed you guilty of a very unworthy action, and learned only recently that I was

mistaken. It was greatly against my inclination to give credence to what I heard, but it came to me in such guise of truthfulness that I could not gainsay it; but it pains me now to confess I ever could have believed that you came to the entertainment about a year ago provided with a bottle of whiskey to solace yourself on the return trip."

"Unfortunately you may still believe it, for it is true."

"True!" she exclaimed, with a look of pained surprised. "Then is it also true that the bottle was the cause of the runaway, and the charge of intemperance the grounds for your dismissal from the bank?"

"Yes."

"Harry Thorne told me he knew positively that you had not taken a drink on that day or night."

"He told you correctly."

"I understood you just now to admit that whiskey was the cause of the accident. I am mystified. I do not see any occasion now for apology," she said in a cold and constrained manner.

"There is none. I am the suppliant for pardon, not you. The bottle, not its contents, caused the accident. My answers to your questions are literally true, though seemingly at variance. Now that you have broached this subject, I will tell you the whole story. Painful as some of it is to me, I will deceive you in no point. Much as I prize your good opinion, I would not seek it at the expense of truth."

Beginning with Harry Thorne's letter inviting him to the entertainment, where he first saw her, he recounted

in detail the incidents, impressions and emotions experienced up to the moment when he was hurled insensible to the ground. In describing his emotions and the resolution reached he represented them as attributable to the recitations and not to the love which at first sight had taken possession of his heart. It was of that love, now the consuming passion of his soul, that he longed most to speak, but feared the revelation would touch no responsive chord in her heart.

She, however, was not deceived. The love-light in his eyes and the tender tones of his voice told more than his words. As she listened, a wild joy bounded in her heart. Once she had said, "The idol is broken, the dream must fade away, and I must banish even the memory of it from my thoughts." Now she knew he was worthy, and the love she had so long sought to stifle burst into full power and dominion over her soul. She uttered no word, but as he finished speaking and looked into her eyes he knew better than words could tell him that the revelation he longed to make need not be delayed. Words may deceive or mislead, but in the eyes of a woman who loves there is a look that never lies. He took her hand in his and gently caressed it.

"Katie," he said, "what I told you was all true, but it was not all of the truth. On that moonlight ride the intoxication of love thrilled through my being. I had no thought but of your sweet face. I heard only the matchless tones of your voice, and from that hour my love has grown in intensity. I feel now that my love is not in vain. Your unresisting hand and the tender

light in your eyes tell me I have gained what is more to me than all the world besides. Oh! my darling, is it not so?"

"Yes, you have all my love. You have had it a long time, but when I was deceived about you, I tried to crush it out. Now, with implicit confidence and unclouded faith in you, my love is all there is of me and you have it all," she said, as she lovingly and trustingly looked into the depths of his blue eyes. Their lips met in that first long, passionate kiss of true affinity in which the breath of two souls are mingled into one and ever so remain.

Some one has said (and it cannot be denied) that the "prettiest thing in the world is the pink of a baby's heel;" but the sweetest thing in the world is the first kiss of a mutually pure and unsullied love. But it cannot last forever; there must be intervals. After-while—how long cannot be accurately stated—St. Clair and Katie came back to earth. What appears to new lovers the bitterest thing in the world is separation. In a few hours Katie must be en route to Philadelphia and St. Clair on his way to Vernon. We leave them now that they may say their good-byes alone.

CHAPTER XXX.

NONE SO FAIR AS SHE.

“To see her is to love her,
And love but her forever;
For nature made her what she is,
And never made anither.”

—*Burns.*

Two days after the departure of Katie Gardiner for the East, word came to Judge Triston from Dr Horn that the long-lost Captain Brannan could be found at Vernon.

The Judge at once set out for that city, determined to satisfy himself by personal investigation. He found that Judge Brown had left on the day following his interview with Dr. Horn and had sent back his resignation as judge. He had also written letters to persons in Vernon, confessing that the name of Brown was an assumed one and that his real name was Presley Brannan. Judge Triston visited the woman that Brannan had claimed as his wife for the last six years, and by whom he had three children. She was living in a neat double cottage situated on the public square of the town. She permitted the Judge to do all the talking, answering his questions only in monosyllables. However, from a prominent attorney of the town, Mr. Rydnour, full information was gained con-

cerning Brannan, alias Brown. He showed a letter just received, in which Brannan stated that he had good reasons for changing his name—namely, that he had several years ago got mixed up with a woman of bad character who was now being kept by an old lawyer at Corinth; that she was a base woman and an adventuress, and that he was afraid of her doing him violence. Judge Triston was astonished beyond measure to find one so base as to traduce a pure and noble woman in order to palliate his own vile actions. Mr. Rydnour gave this letter to Judge Triston, who hastened home. He found that Brannan had preceded him to Corinth and was, through a friend, making overtures toward a reconciliation with the lawful wife whom he had forsaken for seven years. Mrs. Brannan was waiting to advise with Judge Triston before answering the overtures. When the Judge reached home Mrs. Brannan asked him if he thought it was right for her to meet Brannan. For answer he handed her the letter the lawyer had given him. She recognized the handwriting of her husband. While reading the letter she fainted. After recovery she re-read it and her indignation was deeply aroused.

“Go tell him I would not look on his vile face. I could have forgiven much, but not this. To write what he knew to be a vile slander on my good name, at the very time he was seeking reconciliation, is proof of baseness and depravity so great as to be almost beyond belief. There are no words to fitly express my contempt and scorn for such a scoundrel. •Tell him what

I have now said, and then please prepare the papers and get a divorce for me."

The message was faithfully delivered to Brannan, who for a short time remained at Lawrence and Fremont. The friends of former years shunned him. He felt himself an object of contempt, and one day at Lawrence boarded a St. Louis packet boat on its downward trip. He got off the boat at the little village of Malta, a few miles above Cairo. Here he met Mrs. Brown, the woman he had so long lived with at Vernon, and together they took passage on a Mississippi River steamboat for the great Northwest. That was the last ever heard of him.

Several weeks have passed since the parting of St. Clair and Katie. The latter we now find sitting by the bedside of her uncle, Jared Gardiner, in his Philadelphia home. For months the invalid had been very low, sometimes in great pain and suffering, and at others in semi-unconsciousness. He had been too feeble to give much thought to the long delay in hearing directly from his niece, after the message he had sent by Herman Clark. Had he not been so extremely ill, the letters of Clark would not have satisfied him. He could not have waited so patiently for response to his urgent invitation. Her coming at last was the one thing, more than all medicine, that he needed. At first he scarcely understood who it was that so gently ministered to his every want. But as days passed, the thoughtful care and loving ministry of heart and hands wrought happy results. The invalid slowly but steadily improved.

Now, at the end of six weeks, the sick man, though still confined to his couch, was able to spend hours each day in converse with Katie, or in hearing her read the current news and the books he loved best. She had long since learned of the sad experience through which her mother had passed, and had written lovingly and hopefully to cheer and comfort the saddened life. Her own great joy and solace had been in the almost daily letters from St. Clair. She had told her uncle of her lover, and he, happy in the brightness she had brought to him, rejoiced in all the happiness that opened to her.

As she sat by his couch to-day her face shone with unwonted pleasure. A sweet, glad song was in her heart, and the face reflected the joy within.

"What makes you look so happy, my child?" asked her uncle, with kindly look into her lovely face.

"Only a letter, dear uncle. I have read you some of Harvey's love letters, but the one to-day is so different. It somehow opens the deepest chambers of my heart. It exhilarates like old wine."

"You will not deny me the pleasure of hearing it read?"

"Oh, I have no objections to reading it to you. But you will see nothing in it. It is a treasure to me, but I do not expect others to appreciate it as I do."

"Let me judge for myself."

Taking the letter from her bosom, she unfolded and read as follows:

“Vernon, June 7.

“My Darling Katie,—The other evening I sat in a concert hall and heard Rose German, who is here now, sing a song in which the words, ‘dreaming, dreaming, dreaming,’ were repeated over and over. As the words came soft and sweet to my ears, my spirit seemed wafted far away, and strange fancies filled my soul. It appeared as though I came suddenly into a vast realm of life and activity. From whence I came I knew not. I started forth, whither I could not tell. I passed through many worlds—bright and beautiful they were—full of untold wonders to attract and please the fancy. But they satisfied me not, and I passed them by. At length I came to earth and traversed all its broad domain—journeying through picturesque valleys, over grand and inspiring mountains, and along the banks of beautiful streams—through all the sunny Southland, where flowers bloomed in unequaled splendor and where birds of rarest plumage sang the sweetest of songs. I mingled with many people of every name and race and tongue. Among them were great men and noble women. They were gentle and good and kind to me, and I wondered why I was not satisfied; but there was ever present with me a longing desire for something I did not have.

“After I had traversed every land and viewed all the wondrous things of earth, mingled with the noblest of her men and talked with the fairest of her women, I came at last to a spot called Beulahland. In the center of this fair realm I entered a grand and imposing grove. The trees were tall and stately; their high

branches, interlacing, cast over the sweet green earth a grateful shade. A bright stream of cool, refreshing water burst forth from a shady nook beside a great rock, over which had grown a moss, rich and delicate as velvet. It was a serene, quiet spot—a fit trysting-place for the gods. I quenched my thirst from the sparkling stream and then lay down upon the inviting grass to rest and think over all I had seen and all I had hoped for. Long I mused over the countries through which I had passed—of the splendid cities whose grand architecture and bright domes were pictured in the chambers of my memory; of the eminent men and imperial women I had known. I recalled the praises of good men and the flattering words of fair women for achievements I had made. I could hear the alluring voices of maidens of rare beauty and voluptuous form, who had sung love songs in my ears, and I could again feel the gentle pressure of their warm lips and their soft white hands placed in loving caress upon my brow. As I thought of all these things, I asked the question, Why am I not satisfied?

“I turned my weary head to the flowers that grew by the limpid stream and said, ‘Tell me, oh, sweet and fragrant blossom, what it is that will satisfy my inward yearning.’ The fair flower bowed its head and seemed to answer, but I could not understand its language. Then I inquired of the sparkling water as it ran by my feet. It gurgled a name, I thought, but I could not tell what it was. I looked up to the waving branches and asked the same question of the leaves. They rustled and whispered low and sweet, but the

words they said I could not comprehend. With a deep and weary sigh, I closed my eyes and cried from my innermost soul a fervent prayer: 'If there is in all this vast world that which will satisfy my unappeasable longing, let it come to me now.' And lo! there came a breath upon my face more fragrant than the scent of the violet, and I felt upon my lips a kiss so sweet, pure and holy that I could scarce endure the exquisite joy that thrilled through every fibre of my being. I stretched out my arms and clasped in warm embrace the glorious presence, and it resisted not (as I had feared it would), but nestled closer and closer to my panting heart. I opened my eyes and looked into the brightest brown eyes I had ever seen. My hands moved caressingly over form of matchless shape. With exquisite joy, I cried, 'Stay, leave me not—this is all I want; I am satisfied now.'

"As I pressed the sweetest lips man ever kissed, I whispered, 'Tell me your name and who you are?' and a voice, sweeter to me than all the sounds I had ever heard, answered, 'I am Katie, your own perfect mate.'

"I lay still a moment and heard the fragrant flower, the gurgling brook and the murmuring leaves chatting gayly. I could understand them now. They were saying, 'We told you Katie, Katie, Katie all the time; your own perfect, eternal mate. She alone of all the world could satisfy you.'

"Far up on the highest branches I heard the 'caw, caw, caw' of the black-winged crow, and it seemed to say, 'He has seen many as fair as she.' Then I heard the bright young blossom, the babbling brook

and the murmuring leaves answer back: 'There is none so fair to him—none so fair to him.'

"For a few brief hours I knew no want or longing, and then I found my mate was not with me. I listened to hear the sound of her returning steps, and I heard, instead, the voices of the flowers, the water and the leaves saying, 'She will come to you again, with a love as true, pure and holy as when she left you;' and I was satisfied.

Ever yours only,

"H. ST. C."

"You call that a love letter, Katie?" asked the uncle with a pleasant smile.

"It is something that says I am more to him than all the world besides. Oh, uncle, is not love a big thing? The whole universe does not amount to much if put in the balance against the heart's true love! Should I not be happy to know that the priceless treasure of all the devotion and tender yearning of a good man's life is mine?"

"I suppose so; but I have never had such love experience as you speak of. The radiance on your face, the delight in your eyes, tells me of an inward joy that I trust will illumine your whole life, as it does now your countenance. Have you fixed the wedding-day?"

"We have discussed it in our recent letters and agreed to an early day in September, if you are then able to accompany me home. The doctor says that in two months you will be fully restored to health. You might have been well long ago, he says, if you had

not given up to die, under the impression that you had nothing to live for. When I came you realized that there is one, at least, for you to love and cherish; then the tide changed. The desire for life arose, and with it a will power of resistance against bodily infirmity. Now (the doctor being judge), you owe your life to me, and you must do everything as I wish it." She smiled sweetly into his face, and tenderly caressed his hand lying upon the coverlet. The pressure of his hand and gentle look of his eyes told how willing he was to do anything she wished.

What wonders are wrought by a touch of sympathy and love! This man, once so stern and unyielding, was now perfectly submissive. He had come so near to the other world that the littleness of his old-time stubbornness was clearly seen. In the full restoration of health, the old strong-willed nature would still exist, but he would never again be dominated by an unreasoning spirit.

"My dear niece, any reward you may claim shall be yours, so far as in me lies the power to grant it. In both mind and body I discover signs of returning vigor, and feel confident that in a few days more I shall be able to leave the sick-bed. We can then plan and work together in preparing for the journey and the happy event."

She smoothed the pillow, pressed a gentle kiss upon his brow, and left the room. In her own retreat she read again the letter, and then she fell to "dreaming, dreaming, dreaming." But the song she sang was not from her lips; it was down deep in the satisfied heart,

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE LOG CABIN METAMORPHOSED.

“ There’s a bliss beyond all that the minstrel has told,
When two, that are linked in one heavenly tie,
With heart never changing, and brow never cold,
Love on thro’ all ills, and love on till they die.
One hour of a passion so sacred is worth
Whole ages of heartless and wandering bliss;
And oh ! if there be an Elysium on earth,
It is this—it is this !”

—*Moore.*

SEPTEMBER has come, and the journey of Katie Gardiner and her uncle has been made. Once more in Corinth, in the embrace of her mother, and surrounded by the many loving friends made during the eventful preceding year, Katie is as radiantly happy as she is beautiful.

Jared Gardiner in fitting words made amends to Mrs. Brannan for his long years of obstinate unkindness and unreasonable bitterness. He was now a changed man, and readily gained the esteem and friendship of all of his niece’s associates. In honor of Katie’s return, Judge Triston arranged for a social party, to which all her friends were bidden. The occasion, he said, was specially designed to give the Old Maids’ Club an opportunity to take action in reference

to the treason of one or more of the members in the proposed abjuration of the oath of spinsterhood. On the evening of the party there were gathered all who had been present at the two former open meetings of the club, except Herman S. Clark. He, as has been before intimated, was now in prison garb, undergoing just punishment for his crimes. His name was never mentioned. He had passed out from the association and thought of those of whom he was unworthy, and, Judas-like, in the betrayal of his friends, had gone to his own place.

James St. Clair and Lizzie Gage came together, and there were ominous looks and shaking of heads, which seemed to portend suspicions of further desertions from the Old Maids' Club. John Gage and his wife, Lena (the first deserter), who were now the happy possessors of a blue-eyed baby, christened Harvey, in honor of the hero of our story, were among the early arrivals. In looking for Rose German, whose bright wit, happy face and sweet voice had enlivened every gathering, we will see near by the ever-agreeable, generous and noble Frank Burton. In all the time that has passed, the prediction in the first chapter has been verified. He has been loyal and true to his blonde sweetheart, and jealousy's dread pangs have never pierced her heart. Our affection for the sweet singer and her manly lover is warm and lasting. They are happy now, and the prospect of a bright and prosperous future is before them. With the close of this chapter the reader bids them adieu, at least for the present. Whether their further history in connection

with some others of this narrative is to be recorded in another volume depends upon the interest which may be exhibited by readers in the story thus far told.

Harry Thorne, the general favorite, mingled with young and old, adding to the pleasure of all. He had so far escaped Cupid's darts. The ambition of his life was to excel in his chosen profession. His earnest application to study had, for one of his years, advanced him to an enviable position. A bright future was universally predicted for the young lawyer. Full of energy and enthusiasm, he entered with zest into whatever was before him. If work, he worked; if play, he played.

Judge Triston and his wife and Mrs. Brannan were in their element, in the midst of the gayeties of youth. A happier assembly could nowhere have been gathered. The clouds which had darkened the horizon of some during the past year had rolled away, and sunshine, peace and contentment filled all hearts.

As usual, Rose German's songs were greeted with enthusiastic encore, and Katie Gardiner's recitations were received with rapturous applause. At length, Judge Triston arose, and, calling for general attention, said:

"My friends, in the midst of all the gayety, I feel compelled to bring up for consideration a grave matter. An organization of great renown, one in which we have all taken peculiar pride, seems to be in danger of disintegration, and perhaps of complete dissolution. I refer to the Old Maids' Club. I think some action

should be taken in order to prevent extinction of this ancient order, or perhaps I should say order of ancients."

"Oh, Lord! what's the matter with us now?" exclaimed Rose.

"I thought you eloquently answered that question at our first open meeting," answered Lizzie Gage.

"Judge Triston is right," gravely asserted Frank Burton. "Extreme measures should be taken. We have present one to whom rumor at least ascribes kingly prerogatives—one whose heroic reign as King of the Raging Tads qualifies him to sit in judgment upon those who would ruthlessly war against our beloved 'fair and forty' institution. I call upon Harry Thorne to assume the judicial functions, that the ends of justice may be meted out to the guilty, if any such be found."

"I am surprised, Frank," said Thorne, "that you should listen to wild rumor. There never were any Raging Tads, and consequently they never had any king; and to ascribe kingly attributes to me is ridiculous, for, with all my frantic and desperate efforts, I have never been able to erect a throne in even a single fair one's heart."

"Judge Thorne, come and take the seat of justice. It is the will of the majority, that must ever rule in this land," and with these words Judge Triston led him to a large armchair.

Assuming an air of great dignity, Thorne called out, "Order in the court. Who are the accused, and what is the charge?"

"We have strong evidence against Katie Gardiner, and suspicious circumstances implicate Rose German and Lizzie Gage as accessories in a conspiracy to break up the Old Maids' Club," announced Judge Triston, who assumed the role of prosecutor.

"Sheriff James St. Clair, bring the prisoners before me."

Katie, Rose and Lizzie were promptly presented.

"Do you wish counsel?" asked Thorne.

"Yes; but we are unable to pay for it."

"I appoint John Gage to represent the defense. Now, Mr. Prosecutor, state your case."

"Your Honor, we are prepared to introduce proof that Katie Gardiner has unblushingly announced that she is about to enter the state of matrimony—a state at war with every principle of the order of the ancients; and we will undertake to prove also that Rose German and Lizzie Gage are aiding and abetting this treasonable design, and that they contemplate at an early day following her example in renouncing allegiance to the state of spinsterdom."

"What has the defense to say?"

"Your Honor," said Gage, "we admit the charge as to Katie Gardiner, but plead, in justification, circumstances over which she had no control. If she is acquitted, the accessories also go free. We enter plea of justification, and wish to introduce James and Harvey St. Clair as witnesses."

"Proceed."

James St. Clair was brought forward.

"Please state whether or not you, in company with

Herman Clark, Lena Barnard and Lizzie Gage, something over a year ago, visited, at night, a fortune-teller at the log cabin on the cliff."

"I did."

"Who suggested and requested that you and those named go there on that particular night?"

"My brother, Harvey."

"Were any others at the cabin when your party arrived?"

"I saw none."

"Did any others arrive afterwards, and who?"

"Yes; Harry Thorne, Katie Gardiner, Frank Burton and Rose German came there."

"Did your brother arrange for those to be there that night?"

"He did not. Neither of us knew they were coming."

"Were there any special features of interest in the fortunes told that night?"

"Yes; the effect of the seer's deliverances to both Lena Barnard and Katie Gardiner was dramatic and startling. The fortune-teller described their lovers and gave the initials of their names."

"Stand aside. Harvey St. Clair will please take the witness chair."

"You have heard the testimony of your brother James. Can you corroborate all that he has said transpired at the cabin?"

"I can."

"How do you know what took place?"

"I was there."

"You there!" exclaimed Thorne. "Here is a clear case of perjury. The Court has personal knowledge of who was present on that memorable occasion."

Katie, Rose, Lena, Lizzie and Frank looked at each other in blank amazement. A peculiar smile on the face of Harvey St. Clair intensified their bewilderment.

"The Court thinks it has knowledge, but it hasn't," replied Gage; then, addressing the witness, he asked:

"Did you see and hear everything that transpired in the cabin on the night referred to?"

"I did."

"Please explain how that could be."

"I was sitting on the fortune-teller's cot, which was hid by a thin curtain. I was very close behind the chair of the seer. I knew my brother and his companions were coming, but did not know that the party from Corinth would be there. My object was honorable. For a good purpose, I was playing fortune-teller myself that night. The strange-looking being in the chair said and did as I had instructed him."

"Aha!" exclaimed Katie. "Then you are the one responsible for the strange words which have mystified us so long?"

"Yes, but only accidentally. Some exclamations of mine as I saw you unexpectedly enter gave the fortune-teller a clew. For his own amusement he described me and wrote the initials 'H. S. C.' on the chart. I did not arrange for that part at all, as I had no knowledge of your coming there."

"I ask the Court to stop the witness from making

side remarks to the accused, and to answer only questions propounded."

"What did the fortune-teller say concerning the future of Katie Gardiner?"

"He said the crisis of her life was just at hand—that the one with whose fortunes her destiny was to be linked was near by."

"Your honor, I submit my case," said John Gage. "I have shown that the accused had no control over the circumstances and environments of her life. Like a lamb to the slaughter she was led. The oracle spoke and the irrevocable decree went forth, debarring her from continuing in the state of single blessedness. I ask acquittal on the ground of justification."

"I will have to hold the prisoner over, and require that she enter into the bonds of matrimony for her safe appearance in the high Court of Love."

"Although the trial is now over, I should like to ask a question of the last witness. Were you alone behind the curtain in the cabin that night?"

"No."

"Who was with you?"

"The distinguished counsel for the defense, Mr. John Gage."

"Oh, you wretch," exclaimed Lena to John. "If I had known you witnessed my actions that night, my name would be Barnard now and not Gage."

"Ain't you glad you didn't know?"

"Yes," she answered, with a bright, sweet smile, "else, my darling, modest lover might never have proposed."

When nearly all the guests had departed, Katie, who was standing in a group composed of her uncle, her mother and Mr. and Mrs. Judge Triston, called Harvey St. Clair and said:

"I have a strange request to make. Will you grant it?"

"Yes; I know I can agree to anything you desire."

"I wish our marriage to take place in the log cabin on the cliff."

"In a cellar or a garret; it's all the same to me, so I get you," answered St. Clair with loving, happy look.

Judge Triston and his wife began to make objections, but Jared Gardiner interrupted, saying:

"Please let her have her own way. I will see that the cabin is adorned into a bower of loveliness and made a fit temple for the sacred rites. The reception can be given here after the ceremony."

And so it was arranged. A fortnight later, on a beautiful September afternoon, the log cabin witnessed a touching and inspiring scene. A rich carpet covered the floor, and the finest drapery hung upon the walls. Autumn leaves, evergreen plants and fragrant flowers filled every nook. Not a chink or log was to be seen. Canopied over all were boughs of trees bent and twined together. It was a chamber of exquisite taste and beauty. At the appointed hour, carriages brought the small and select company invited. Harry Thorne, as best man; Frank Burton, James St. Clair, Rose German and Lizzie Gage, as attendants of bride and groom, filled their offices to their own satisfaction and to that of every one else.

The bride was fittingly arrayed for the time and place and presented a picture of unsurpassed loveliness as she stood beside the handsome, noble man to whom she had given all the wealth of her heart's love.

Dr. Colyar performed the ceremony in the happiest style. His reference to the surroundings as typical of the bower of love into which their lives had entered was most eloquent and touching. Congratulations that followed could not have been heartier or more joyous. The spot where the fortune-teller's strange words had been uttered, where the confessions of Carter had been made, where the humiliation of Clark had been witnessed and where the knowledge of Jared Gardiner's illness and desire for reconciliation had been gained, was now the place of the fullness and completeness of all the hopes and longings of the two souls now and forever blended into one. Here we bid them adieu.

“Farewell!—a word that hath been and must be—
A sound that makes us linger—yet, farewell!”

THE END.



THIS LIST EMBRACES NEARLY
FIVE HUNDRED AMERICAN
COPYRIGHT BOOKS.

BY THE BEST AND MOST POPULAR AUTHORS.

**All handsomely bound in cloth, with gilt
backs, suitable for libraries.**

*The Publishers, on receipt of price, will send any book on
this Catalogue by mail, postage free.*

G. W. DILLINGHAM CO., Publishers,
119 & 121 WEST 23d STREET, NEW YORK.

Mary J. Holmes' Novels.

"Mrs. Holmes' stories are universally read. Her admirers are numberless. She is in many respects without a rival in the world of fiction. Her characters are always life like, and she makes them talk and act like human beings, subject to the same emotions, swayed by the same passions, and actuated by the same motives which are common among men and women of everyday existence."

Tempest and Sunshine.....	\$1 50	Darkness and Daylight....	\$1 50
English Orphans.....	1 50	Hugh Worthington.....	1 50
Homestead on the Hillside.	1 50	Cameron Pride.....	1 50
'Lena Rivers.....	1 50	Rose Mather.....	1 50
Meadow Brook.....	1 50	Ethelyn's Mistake.....	1 50
Dora Deane.....	1 50	Millbank.....	1 50
Cousin Maude.....	1 50	Edna Browning.....	1 50
Marian Grey.....	1 50	West Lawn.....	1 50
Edith Lyle.....	1 50	Mildred.....	1 50
Daisy Thornton.....	1 50	Forrest House.....	1 50
Chateau D'Or.....	1 50	Madeline.....	1 50
Queenie Hetherton.....	1 50	Christmas Stories.....	1 50
Bessie's Fortune.....	1 50	Gretchen.....	1 50
Marguerite.....	1 50	Dr. Hathern's Daughters....	1 50
Mrs. Hallam's Companion..	1 50	Paul Ralston (<i>New</i>).....	1 50

May Agnes Fleming's Novels.

"Mrs. Fleming's stories are growing more and more popular every day. Their delineations of character, lifelike conversations, **flashes of wit**, constantly varying scenes, and deeply interesting plots, combine to place their author in the very first rank of Modern Novelists."

Guy Earlscount's Wife.....	\$1 50	Heir of Charlton.....	\$1 50
A Wonderful Woman.....	1 50	Carried by Storm.....	1 50
A Terrible Secret.....	1 50	Lost for a Woman.....	1 50
A Mad Marriage.....	1 50	A Wife's Tragedy.....	1 50
Norine's Revenge.....	1 50	A Changed Heart.....	1 50
One Night's Mystery.....	1 50	Pride and Passion.....	1 50
Kate Danton.....	1 50	Sharing Her Crime.....	1 50
Silent and True.....	1 50	A Wronged Wife.....	1 50
Maude Percy's Secret.....	1 50	The Actress' Daughter.....	1 50
The Midnight Queen.....	1 50	The Queen of the Isle.....	1 50
Edith Percival.....	1 50	Wedded for Pique.....	1 50
A Fateful Abduction.....	1 50	The Sisters of Torwood(<i>New</i>)	1 50

Augusta J. Evans' Novels.

"Who has not read with rare delight the novels of Augusta Evans? Her strange, wonderful, and fascinating style; the profound depths to which she sinks the probe into human nature, touching its most sacred chords and springs; the intense interest thrown around her characters, and the very marked peculiarities of her principal figures, conspire to give an unusual interest to the works of this eminent Southern authoress."

Beulah	\$1 75	St. Elmo.....	\$2 00
Macaria.....	1 75	Vashti.....	2 00
Inez.....	1 75	Infelice.....	2 00
At the Mercy of Tiberius...	2 00		

ST. ELMO, *Magnolia Edition*, 2 vols. 8vo., *Magnificently Illustrated with 30 Photogravure and Half-tone Engravings.* Per set, \$6.00.

Julie P. Smith's Novels.

"The novels by this author are of unusual merit, uncommonly well written, clever, and characterized by great wit and vivacity. They are growing popular and more popular every day."

Widow Goldsmith's Daughter.....	\$1 50	The Widower.....	\$1 50
Chris and Otho.....	1 50	The Married Belle.....	1 50
Ten Old Maids.....	1 50	Courting and Farming.....	1 50
Lucy.....	1 50	Kiss and Be Friends.....	1 50
His Young Wife.....	1 50	Blossom Bud.....	1 50

Marion Harland's Novels.

"The Novels of Marion Harland are of surpassing excellence. By intrinsic power of character-drawing and descriptive facility, they hold the reader's attention with the most intense interest and fascination."

Alone.....	\$1 50	My Little Love.....	\$1 50
Hidden Path.....	1 50	Phemie's Temptation.....	1 50
Moss Side.....	1 50	The Empty Heart.....	1 50
Nemesis.....	1 50	From My Youth Up.....	1 50
Miriam	1 50	Helen Gardner.....	1 50
Sunny Bank.....	1 50	Husbands and Homes.....	1 50
Ruby's Husband.....	1 50	Jessamine.....	1 50
At Last.....	1 50	True as Steel.....	1 50

Albert Ross' Novels.

New Cloth Bound Editions.

"There is a great difference between the productions of Albert Ross and those of some of the sensational writers of recent date. When he depicts vice he does it with an artistic touch, but he never makes it attractive. Mr. Ross' dramatic instincts are strong. His characters become in his hands living, moving creatures."

Thou Shalt Not.....\$1 00	In Stella's Shadow.....\$1 00
His Private Character..... 1 00	Moulding a Maiden..... 1 00
Speaking of Ellen..... 1 00	Why I'm Single..... 1 00
Her Husband's Friend..... 1 00	An Original Sinner..... 1 00
The Garston Bigamy..... 1 00	Love at Seventy..... 1 00
Thy Neighbor's Wife..... 1 00	A Black Adonis..... 1 00
Young Miss Giddy..... 1 00	Love Gone Astray..... 1 00
Out of Wedlock..... 1 00	Their Marriage Bond..... 1 00
Young Fawcett's Mabel.... 1 00	A New Sensation (<i>New</i>).... 1 00
His Foster Sister..... 1 00	

John Esten Cooke's Works.

"The thrilling historic stories of John Esten Cooke must be classed among the BEST and most POPULAR of all American writers. The great contest between the States was the theme he chose for his Historic Romances. Following until the close of the war the fortunes of Stuart, Ashby, Jackson and Lee, he returned to 'Eagle's Nest,' his old home, where, in the quiet of peace, he wrote volume after volume, intense in dramatic interest."

Surry of Eagle's Nest.....\$1 50	Hammer and Rapier.....\$1 50
Fairfax..... 1 50	Mohun..... 1 50
Hilt to Hilt..... 1 50	Captain Ralph..... 1 50
Beatrice Hallam..... 1 50	Col. Ross of Piedmont.... 1 50
Leather and Silk..... 1 50	Robert E. Lee..... 1 50
Miss Bonnybel..... 1 50	Stonewall Jackson..... 1 50
Out of the Foam..... 1 50	Her Majesty the Queen.... 1 50

A. S. Roe's Novels.

"There is no writer of the present day who excels A. S. Roe, in his particular line of fiction. He is distinguished by his fidelity to nature, his freedom from affectation, his sympathy with the interests of everyday existence and his depth and sincerity of feeling. His stories appeal to the heart, and strengthen and refresh it."

True to the Last.....\$1 50	To Love and To Be Loved..\$1 50
A Long Look Ahead..... 1 50	Time and Tide.. 1 50
The Star and the Cloud.... 1 50	Woman Our Angel..... 1 50
I've Been Thinking..... 1 50	Looking Around... 1 50
How Could He Help It..... 1 50	The Cloud on the Heart.... 1 50
Like and Unlike..... 1 50	Resolution..... 1 50

MAR '15 1899

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00022052305

